

Cornell University Library
Ithaca, New York

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME OF THE
SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND
THE GIFT OF
HENRY W. SAGE

1891

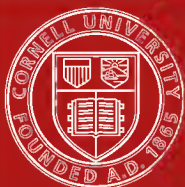
Cornell University Library
BR121 .T47 1918

Not impossible religion / by Silvanus P.



3 1924 029 237 216

olin



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

A Not Impossible Religion

A Not Impossible Religion

By
Alvanus H. Thompson
மத., பக்த.

London: John Lane, The
Bodley Head. **New York:**
John Lane Company

MCMXVIII

SECOND EDITION

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES, ENGLAND

Preface

A NUMBER of Dr. Silvanus Thompson's friends had, from time to time, expressed the hope that he would give to a wider public some of the results of his thoughts on religion and life, by which not a few had been helped in an age when many find it difficult to reconcile the methods of science with the spirit of Christianity as it is expressed in the accepted views of the Churches.

Realising as he did how many men and women, within and without the various sections of organised Christianity, were longing for an expression of faith which they could whole-heartedly accept as true, knowing, too, that they had failed to obtain in the orthodox creeds and communions the help they were seeking, he was at work at the time of his death, in June, 1916, on a volume in which he wished to set forth his own vision of a simple spiritual Christianity, in no wise in conflict with the discoveries of research or the attitude of science, a living practical religion which would meet the deepest needs of others, as it had done of his own life. His intention was that the volume should be anonymous, but although he did not live to complete the work, it seems right that now it should be published under his name. He had corrected some of the chapters, others were still unrevised, one was incomplete, and one to be entitled "Finis Coronat," remained, alas ! unwritten.

Doubtless many passages would have been modified or altered by him, but it has seemed better to issue these papers substantially as he left them.

In a very few cases one or two omissions or alterations have been made, and three chapters are withheld which do not seem necessary to the scheme of the book. It should be added that the various chapters were written, in some cases at an interval of years, in the midst of an exceptionally busy life, crowded with intellectual activity, and burdened with a heavy weight of work for others. In one or two cases they were prepared and delivered as separate addresses.

In his intense love of truth and indignation with unreality and insincerity, Dr. Thompson has sometimes written severely of orthodoxy and its exponents. It must not be thought, however, that he did not love and cherish true religion everywhere, even when it found expression in the most orthodox language and way of worship. Two friends amongst those with whom he was accustomed to meet and discuss some of the deepest problems of life and religion, whom he regarded with especial love and veneration, were in the one case a devout Roman Catholic, and in the other an Anglican clergyman.

Above all, it must be remembered that this book was not intended for men and women who are content with a creed and a worship which are accepted as orthodox. It is addressed to those who are already unhappy and troubled because they cannot reconcile the dogmas they had been taught to believe with what they are convinced is the true attitude to life ; some of whom have already long given up any

connection with organised Christianity, while others still continue to observe forms of religion which have ceased to have meaning for them, and in so doing feel, at intervals, an uneasy sense of insincerity. To such men especially the writer of this book makes his appeal. He would have been the last to proclaim his own views as a dogma, or to ask that they should be accepted by others untested by the fire of thought in the crucible of experience. He did not set them forth as a final statement of what he believed or would have another believe. He is rather exposing to his reader a method of approaching life's problems, an attitude of mind and will, a way of life, not a theory about life. He was ever himself learning and helping others to learn. Above all other research he had learned to set the quest for truth ; it was in all his own labours his inspiration. He wrote knowing that he might make mistakes, that he needs must make them, but he knew, too, that he was seeking the truth, and writing for the seekers of truth. He shares the fruit of his own religious experience with his fellow-men, asking them not to accept his judgment of it, but rather to taste and see for themselves as they walk along the same way, or by different roads to the same goal.

T. EDMUND HARVEY.

Contents

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT	xi
CHAPTER	
I. A NOT IMPOSSIBLE RELIGION	3
II. RELIGIO VITAE	11
III. NISI DOMINUS AEDIFICAVERIT	30
IV. RESURRECTION	43
V. VISION	62
VI. CHRIST THE BEGINNING	73
VII. EVANGELIUM CHRISTI	88
VIII. THE IMITATION OF CHRIST	104
IX. MATERIALISM	116
X. NEHUSHTAN	137
XI. THE DUTY OF CHOICE	161
XII. LIFE AND CREED	185
XIII. THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT	198
XIV. SPIRITUAL LAWS	208
XV. NIHIL HUMANUM ALIENUM	223
XVI. CHRIST'S OWN CREED	240
XVII. THE PRIMITIVE CHRIST-FOLLOWERS	262
XVIII. THE FOUNDATION THAT IS LAID	280
XIX. THE SACRAMENT OF LIFE	293
XX. REGNUM COELI INTER HOMINES	310
XXI. SEE THE CHRIST STAND	317
INDEX	333

Introductory Statement

THE author of these Chapters desires to remain anonymous, having no purpose to serve by their publication beyond a desire to be helpful to earnest seekers after truth who find themselves at variance with existing religious organisations. A layman in his status, he is willing, for the better comprehension of what he has written, to allow the following information to be prefixed. He is by profession a scientific man and a Fellow of more than one of the learned Societies. Born into a family of simple-minded, intensely devout, educated evangelical Christians, he was attracted for a time to Anglican worship as practised with dignity and restraint in the cathedrals of England. Then, driven towards agnosticism by the pretensions of clerics and their bigotry towards science, but never ceasing either from frequenting public worship or from the study of the Scriptures and other religious writings, the author has come slowly, and with twenty years of heart-searching to the convictions here set down.

The various Chapters have been written at different times during the last ten years. With one exception (Chapter XXI.), they were completed before the outbreak of the Great War. There has been no attempt to weave them into an organic fabric. Doubtless the objection will be raised that the book does not present a consistent whole, but is

made up of fragments : that there is no connected system, no unifying theological basis. This is precisely so ; the Chapters are merely *aperçus*, and do not claim to be other. A grievous error for centuries past has been that the theologians—well-intentioned, learned, and pious men—have tried to weave a consistent whole out of imperfect *aperçus*, some historical, some traditional, some speculative ; and, having framed a system of logical consistency on this defective basis, forthwith have branded as heresy any view of truth that did not fit in with their system. The Fathers, the Councils, the Doctors, the Scholastics, the Reformers, have all had their day. The Fathers seized the salient points, which the Councils and the Doctors formulated and welded together. The Scholastics sought to fortify the system with irresistible logic, and indeed so successfully that the Reformers, while breaking away politically, remained more than ever the slaves of abstract theology. The logic of the Scholastics came in, in fact, too soon, before men had realised how imperfect were the available records of religious history, and how much of that which had passed for historic fact was only sacred folk-lore. Hence it is that the logical consistency of abstract theology is its greatest condemnation. It bars out the progressive revelations of truth, and imposes on the twentieth century notions which were evolved in the third and fourth. Christianity is thus to-day constrained in the swaddling bands of its childhood. As to the objection that the present work possesses no unifying theological basis, let it be plainly realised, once for all, that theology is not the basis of religion ; it is, on the contrary, its product ; or, rather, it is

the conjoint product of religion and philosophy. The theologies are for the most part inverted pyramids, standing—some of them very obliquely—upon very narrow bases of fact, and propped up by many artificial supports known to be historically rotten. Moreover, for the purposes of practical religion, theologies do not unify; theologies have ever been swords of division. Love, the immemorial unifier of souls, is the very antithesis of theology. Love is conspicuously absent from the official creeds. *Odium theologicum* lies poles asunder from *Amor Dei*. He who walked this earth as the supreme revelation of Divine Love was truly no theologian. How He broke away from the orthodox theology of His day, and denounced its professors as hypocrites, seems to have been forgotten by orthodox theologians of every subsequent age. And the fruit of their labours is seen in that unholy strife of tongues between the sects that yet call themselves Christian. The revolt of the thinking part of mankind from the theologically-bound Churches is the legitimate and inevitable result. Yet the revolt from theologies, to which the emptiness of our churches and chapels bears witness, does not imply a revolt from real religion. Man needs a religion of the heart; he is naturally, and in his best moments, devout; he inherits an imperious instinct towards worship. The church and the chapel offer him their variegated theologies and their several sedulously cultivated bigotries. He would still come to worship, as of yore, were he not driven away by the assumption—common alike to evangelical and catholic clerics—that religion is theology. Is it not often too true that when theology comes in at the door, devotion

flies out at the window? The temple is left empty, though swept with decorous assiduity, and garnished with the whole panoply of orthodoxy. Our orthodox theology is like a museum of the chain armour and the antique weapons with which our forefathers fought against the Moslem and the Goth. One can trace in the orthodox creeds clauses, meaningless to-day, which owe their origin to the contests of the early Christian Church with the Gnostics and the Docetists of the first centuries. The attitude of the average theologian towards the advances of modern science, towards the discoveries of modern scholars, towards the great critics whose sifting of religious history and of biblical literature has marked so great an advance in the clarification of religious thought, has, alas ! too often, been both unreasoning and unreasonable. Of such obscurantism thinking men are to-day righteously impatient. The theologian who wraps himself in the impenetrable cloak of ignorance, and closes his eyes to the fact that the world moves onward, is to-day the greatest obstacle to the progress of real religion. Not the atheist, not the socialist, but the blind theologian is at the moment he who imperils the life of religion amongst the peoples of the earth. The unreality, the uselessness, of the theological equipment that has done duty for religion has brought in its train the inevitable recoil. It has made orthodox religion impossible to men of thought and sincerity. But it has not destroyed religion, nor has it made the following of Christ impossible. This, indeed, is the theme of the following Chapters. There is a large and increasing class of thoughtful men and women who, while profoundly dissatisfied with the teaching

of the Churches, are nevertheless deeply conscious of the need for their own souls of a religion that shall bring them nearer to the inmost truth of things. To these outcasts of orthodoxy, to the honest and reverential thinkers after spiritual enlightenment, does the author now address himself. Of several things he is profoundly convinced. First, that the day is gone by when the essence of Christianity can be regarded as consisting in either dogma or literature ; it consists in the living of a holy—that is a healthy and helpful—life, after the pattern showed by Jesus Christ, particularly in devotion to the needs of humanity, and in self-renunciation for the sake of the weak, the sorrowful, and the suffering. Secondly, that in the present day, though it is still necessary to overthrow the idols of the Temple, the Temple must not be left empty ; in other words, that constructive thought is more needed than destructive criticism. Thirdly, that in the future, in religious teaching, regard must be had to the spiritual needs of man, and to the immediate intuitions of the Divine in the soul, rather than to by-gone tradition which has too long held men's souls in thrall. The author publishes this work with the conviction that no advance in religious thought is possible unless the quest for truth, without fear of the consequences to accepted tradition, be ever accompanied by at least an equal regard for the preservation of a reverential spirit.

A Not Impossible Religion

CHAPTER I

A Not Impossible Religion

ALL thoughtful men amongst those who are neither on the one hand bound to existing ecclesiastical systems, nor, on the other, estranged from spiritual emotions, admit that a reconstruction of religious beliefs and ideas is a vital necessity of our time. Many of the orthodox Christian dogmas are dead beyond resuscitation ; they have had their day. The age has learned much that preceding ages knew not, and with the fuller knowledge has come a natural and inevitable decay of the imperfect learning of the past. Even those who hold to the older forms of belief and subscribe to the ancient creeds do so either avowing a new definition of the old terms or else interpreting them unconsciously or implicitly in ways that change their whole intent. The orthodoxy of to-day differs thus widely from the orthodoxy of the eighteenth century, or of the thirteenth or of the sixth. The inexorable laws of change and growth forbid stagnation of men's thoughts concerning the things that are eternal and invisible. It is not that men believe less : they believe more. But their beliefs are centering less around tradition and more around ascertained knowledge ; the quality of belief has

changed rather than its quantity. The traditional drops away, scaring the timid-souled or the empty-souled, causing them to think that this natural and inevitable growth is a decay of faith. It is rather its uprising in the commencement of a new order. To the stagnant all development seems like destruction.

But in all this movement forward it is inevitable that there should be some unlovely features. Impatient minds are keen to drop the old before they have learned the new ; and slowly-moving spirits are apt to see in the new nothing but spiritual loss. There are also ever at work, both amongst the old and the new, tendencies to degenerate ; so that neither the old nor the new is altogether healthy. In no department of human life is progress more difficult or more open to misunderstanding than in religion. Of religious ideas, on whatever founded, the mind of man is particularly tenacious, associated as they almost always are with the things that touch the deepest parts of his nature, the joys, the sorrows, the struggles, that have been his from the cradle onward. Many continue by force of sacred associations to hold, as they themselves would freely admit, the religious ideas which they received in their childhood long after the time when any real basis for them has passed out of their lives, or when it has been perceived to be no basis at all. They cling all the more tenaciously to a dogma because they are dimly conscious that it is merely a dogma, not an eternal truth of demonstrable power. For they see as yet nothing that for them can take the place of that which is threatened. Fearing to lose all, they will part with none of their early beliefs. So they grow encrusted in an environment of dead tradition, and

mistrust all freedom of soul. By reaction against the stubbornness of this conservatism there arise others for whom the old has no such sacredness, and who, feeling the dead weight thus opposing them, strike out, regardless whom their activity may wound. Estrangement between souls equally sincere in their way becomes thus inevitable; and the bitterness of language, as well as of act, which follows on estrangement only widens the breach.

Three sections may be to-day distinguished amongst the multitudes. One is made up of those who adhere to old forms of faith, and who though divided up into many sects with conflicting doctrines, still find their religion serve as a more or less efficient rule of life and conduct, and think, speak and act as though their particular creed were indeed the sole true rule.

A second section has thrown off all semblance of religious belief, and so far as it holds any views at all on human conduct bases them purely upon ethical and sociological considerations, which it appears to regard as the only rational bases for motive. The large majority of educated and scientific men on the Continent belong to this section.

✓ A third section comprises all the careless and worldly minded who, whether they profess any belief or none, act as though no religion were obligatory on themselves or any one else, and for whom the getting on in this world looms larger than spiritual or ethical considerations of any kind. For brevity we may call these three sections the religionists, the non-religionists, and the indifferent.

Besides these three groups, belonging to none, but inclining more or less to one or other, there

remains however a fourth group, composed of those who, without any reflection upon the others, and purely by way of a convenient denomination, may be called the merely earnest-minded. These are the seekers after truth, who by force of character and conviction cannot be indifferent; who realise that the religious instinct in mankind is not to be ignored or set aside; who perceive that somehow the ethical and sociological propositions of the non-religionist do not furnish adequate motives for right conduct; who recognise that chemistry, mechanics, history, and logic do not constitute everything in the world, that spiritual forces are phenomena to be reckoned with; who, in fact, are, without perhaps knowing or admitting it, of a deeply religious cast of mind. Yet they revolt instinctively from the claims made by professed religionists; they refuse to stake their spiritual, moral and intellectual welfare upon the acceptance of that which appears to them a mass of folk-lore and tradition, however sublime and elevated the ethical and spiritual influences bound up with it. While they admit that Christianity has done much for the world, and freely acknowledge the intense spiritual elevation and nobility of soul of the great Christian leaders of all ages, they are repelled by the narrowness of its creeds, the artificiality of its observances, the puerility of its rituals, the materialism of its views on spiritual truth, the insincerities of its professors and—shall we say it—the hypocrisies of its professional exponents. They see wealthy princes of the Church professing to represent on earth the lonely and self-denying Son of man. They see lip-service instead of right living accepted as test of membership. They see fantastic

mummeries and displays of priestly millinery take the place of the sacrifice of contrite hearts. They see tradition exalted over knowledge and reason. They see a book exalted into an idol. They see women subjugated beneath the thumb of the priest ; men bowing down before a piece of consecrated bread, conscience subordinated to an infallible council or an infallible synod, or an infallible Pope. They see congregations running after the dogma of the silver-tongued preacher, or howling hymns in concerted discord under the hypnotic spell of the "revivalist." They see faction and domination in the ecclesiastical systems, recrimination between rival creed-mongers, and bitter warfare between sectarian parties. What wonder if from all this weltering mass of human decadence the earnest seeker after truth turns sadly away ! If *this* be Christianity, from which the whole spirit of Jesus Christ has evaporated, then I will be no Christian. By no stretch of perverse imagination can one conceive of Jesus Christ reciting the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, or prostrating Himself in the processional at St. Barnabas, or helping the "Wee Frees" by a midnight raid to capture a church from the "United Frees." "The Churchmen fain would kill their Church, as the Churches have killed their Christ." By no possibility can the earnest truth-seeker consent to degrade himself or the ideal of high spiritual destiny by seeking membership in such associations. The higher his conception of the divine greatness of Jesus Christ, the more sincere his admiration for His character, the more complete his acceptance of His life as the pattern of a perfect life in the service of man, the

more impossible does it become for him to contemplate his becoming a "Christian." "Christianity" is for him, whatever its splendid past, an effete thing. In the name of all that is best, purest, holiest, most true within him, from this he must hold aloof.

And yet, in spite of all, there remains ineradically fixed a primal fact of human nature, this instinct of religion. In common with all the "Christians," to say nothing of the Buddhists, Brahmins, Moslems, Jews, the truth-seeker finds within him a soul that needs must seek after the Highest; a conviction that "He is"; an indestructible impulse to worship that which he feels to be Best. He may have gone further, as many have done, and found that in none of these religions he can discover a higher ideal of righteousness than in the ancient books of the Jews, and in none a more sublime example of human devotion than in the records of the life of Jesus Christ, whom (whether human, or superhuman, as His followers held Him to be) he feels to represent the supreme development of a human character, a presentation therefore of the divine possibilities in man. Alike in obedience to the imperative religious instinct within him, and in wondering adoration of the perfect life, may he not—nay, must he not—if he have travelled thus far in the spiritual pilgrimage, attempt at least to become himself a follower of Christ? If he be a real truth-seeker, one who has no other aim than to find and follow truth, and if he have travelled thus far, there is for him no alternative; follower of Christ he must strive to be; nay, by that very striving he *has* already, at however great a distance, become such.

What religion, then, is open to such a one? From inherent conviction, from very sincerity and purity of soul, from intensity of sympathy with his fellow-men he is impelled to this point: Follower of Christ, yet by every fibre of his nature repelled, revolted, restrained from that which calls itself "Christianity" and which is for him for ever impossible. Is there no place for him? Must he remain for ever outside, alone, a solitary seeker after truth?

Not solitary, for to-day there are thousands of such, seeking, perchance finding. Some of them have left the Churches in which they were reared—some are still nominally within. Some have never belonged to any Church, having advanced to this point from the ranks of the non-religionist or of the indifferent. Still there are thousands of them. The nineteenth century opened their eyes, and made orthodox "Christianity" for ever an impossibility to them, but it has left them stranded. It has given them nothing to put into the place of that which has crumbled away. They are scattered, without leader, or teacher. Here and there they hear a sympathetic voice, sometimes from within the pale, sometimes from without.

One whom no one will charge with any leanings towards Christianity—the late Mr. Herbert Spencer—wrote at the end of his Autobiography:—

"I have come more and more to look calmly on forms of religious belief to which I had in earlier days a pronounced aversion. . . . Thus religious creeds, which in one way or another occupy the sphere that rational interpretation seeks to occupy, and fails the more it seeks, I have come to regard with a sympathy based on community of need: feeling that

dissent from them results from inability to accept the solutions offered, joined with the wish that solutions could be found."

Another, within the orthodox pale, and still happily with us — the Rev. H. Rashdall — has written :—

"Sooner or later we must come to outlive the Theology of the nursery. Are we doing anything to fill its place?"

The truth is that thousands are seeking for something that has never yet been presented to them ; a religion that shall not be impossible for men of thought, knowledge, and reverence. This not-impossible religion has not yet been suggested, at least in terms of modern phraseology ; perhaps it may not be in our time. Whenever it appears it will at least command attention ; it will not repel by irreverence of handling, however frankly it deals with matters made sacred by centuries of holy association. In its enunciation there will be no trace of that cheap and flippant unbelief which is "worse than earnest credulity." But it must be based upon a frank recognition that, since the last few decades, the centre of gravity of religious thought is no longer situated where it used to be ; that thought and knowledge have advanced. Surely there should equally be an advance in that reverential spirit without which so much that may be written will miss of acceptance.

CHAPTER II

Religio Vitae

I DO not admire the temper of the Iconoclast. Iconoclasm, however necessary at times, always does some harm. It is an unblessed mood that drives the iconoclast even to his necessary work. To undo work that has been built up painfully and laboriously by older hands, however much it may have survived its usefulness, is an ungrateful task. In religious matters it is always easier to pull down than to build up : and a destructive act should be undertaken only as an extreme remedy. Co-operation in construction is infinitely more useful than any destructive effort. Religion is after all not a divine comedy but a divine syntellechy : and of the success of any religious movement, to say nothing of its rightness, only the after-ages can judge. The act of the iconoclast, whether deliberate or impulsive, seldom redounds to his credit. In any case I do not envy the iconoclast his task. Vivisection may be right, necessary for the ultimate good of humanity, yet I will be no vivisector. I recognise that what may be right for one to do may not be right for another. Right-doing is often a question of persons and circumstances. Iconoclasm is not for me. I would not pull down a

church—not even a temple of Pagan worship. I would leave it to crumble. I would not destroy an Eikon ; I would, on the contrary, preserve it carefully in a museum. The temper which would “utterly destroy” the idols is not admirable ; better far to convince mankind that they *are* idols. Once that conviction is established, it would be useless to destroy them. In that which passes to-day for religion there are many idolatries, many superstitions. Bacon’s category of idols—idols of the cave, idols of the tribe, idols of the market-place, and idols of the amphitheatre—by no means exhausted the list. There are idols of the temple as well as of the cave and of the tribe. Superstition is no less superstition because of being associated with the purest of lives or the strictest of creeds. And superstitions there are, many and rampant, in almost every form of religion that calls itself “Christian” to-day. Let us not denounce those who in all sincerity cleave to them. Leave them alone. Their faith “through form is pure as thine.” Let the fuller light of knowledge spread. Let the newer generations see that these things are but idols ; that vain accretions have grown up about a core of truth. Be very sure that there is such a core. Leave them alone to crumble away. Let us not go about to destroy them by any active interference. Let us rather build up something truer, more noteworthy, more enduring.

The religion that is wanted in the world is not a replica of any of the religions in power to-day. What is wanted is a vitalising rule of life, that shall itself make for, and consist in right conduct ; that shall itself build up and *live* in noble character : it

shall be in principle a true *religio vitae*, a matter of life, not of creed.

It has been well said that all good men are, at bottom, of the same religion. The saying is profoundly true ; but it would be utterly false to assert that all good men are at bottom of the same creed. Even a very brief reflection will show that a man's religion which he lives may be a totally different thing from the creed which he professes. It may be—such is the complexity of human nature—a totally different thing from the creed which he supposes himself to believe. The mistake of thinking that creed is religion, and that religion is creed, has ever worked the greatest spiritual mischief. It lit the fires of the Inquisition, it led to the murder of Papists by Elizabeth as well as to the murder of Protestants by Mary. It caused Calvin to burn Michael Servetus at Geneva. It made the Puritan Fathers of New England hang the Quaker martyrs. It is responsible for the massacre of Armenians by Turks, and for the butchery of Jews by Russians in our time. It is based on the inadmissible assumption—inadmissible in the light of modern thought—that the minds of men are so constituted that they can all think alike ; whereas the truth is that their minds differ from one another as widely as do the shapes of their noses. At the risk of the simile appearing grotesque it may be said that as the sense of smell depends upon the nose, but in no effectual way depends upon the shape of the nose, so a man's religious sense is bound up with his beliefs, but is independent of the particular shape of his beliefs. Two men of different mould may have quite different creeds, and yet each be truly religious.

It is a fact of the most ordinary occurrence, plain to observers in every walk of life.

At the base of any vital religion there lies the perception of a great fact of human consciousness, which however expressed—and it may be expressed in very varied terms—that man and his environment, though material and subject to the limitations of time and space, are not material only ; that the material takes its place amidst, and is but part of, something supra-material, something that is not defined in space nor delimited by time. Man is a thinking animal ; but he is not merely a thinking animal. He is possessed of yet another faculty beside that of reason ; a something which is called a soul, or a spirit, or a conscience ; something which brings to him the elemental conceptions of justice, mercy, love ; something which not only enables him to distinguish more or less clearly between right and wrong, but which when he has done wrong touches him with a twinge of unhappiness or pain. Without stopping to inquire here whether this faculty be in reality more than a single one, or consist of several faculties, we must treat the fact of its existence as beyond dispute. It brings to a man consciousness of something which though invisible, intangible, immaterial, is greater than himself ; something which he did not make, which he cannot destroy ; a spiritual environment of which, though in one aspect it seems to be outside himself, he is himself a part. It is in the recognition of this elementary fact in human consciousness that religious thought begins. The possession of this consciousness is not confined to any one race or tribe of men, not to any one age. It is a

common property of the human race, however various the systems of religion which have grown up within it. Assuredly it is more highly developed in some men than in others, in some races than in others. But being thus shared amongst the human family it becomes an objective fact, a matter of evidence, not possible to be ignored or ruled out as a mere phantasy. But besides being thus shared by the whole race it is in a certain sense the special property of the individual. Whatever he may learn of the workings of the religious faculty in others, his knowledge of it at first hand, as it lives within himself, is to him a much more real and vital concern. Whatever evidence there may be from without, the conviction from within is, at any rate in most cases, far more potent. To feel pain or hunger or joy in one's self is a totally different thing in kind from merely observing or being told of the experience of those feelings by others. Had we not felt them ourselves, how could we realise what they were in others? A man comes to understand the religious instinct in others by its working within himself. The instinct of religion is then innate, as natural as the instinct of hunger, or of self-preservation, or of sex. Even in the most degraded and degenerate, the criminal lost to all sense of duty or honour, there still exist germs of the finer impulses; witness the code of honour amongst thieves, and the oft-recorded acts of self-renunciation amongst the worst of criminals towards others of their own set.

We start, then, from the facts of experience, evidence, and conviction, that there exists an objective something, apart from ourselves but in

which we ourselves somehow share, which though non-material and non-physical is yet as real as, nay at times more real than, the world of matter. It constitutes a realm of human experience to be investigated; a subject for intellect to examine, in order that its facts may be explored, its laws discovered, its workings comprehended. The religious faculty is a something different from the intellect, and the truths perceived by it are not to be discovered by the intellect. Yet the intellectual faculty may be—nay, must be—applied to the things perceived by the religious faculty if they are to be rightly apprehended. An analogy will make this point clearer. A man may be in perfect possession of the reasoning faculties, trained in logic and mathematics and yet have no sense of smell. The perception of odours is attained by the use of a faculty different from these. But, given that faculty, then the perceptions which it brings to the individual would be of little service did he not bring his reason to bear upon them, and draw useful inferences by comparison of them. He might indeed, if himself devoid of the sense of smell, collect from the experience of others, with infinite effort, a large number of facts on which to generalise. A blind man might similarly learn the facts and deduce the laws of optics, might even train himself in a mechanical way to paint pictures. This is not, however, the point. The point is that religious experiences in ourselves and in others, though acquired through the non-intellectual faculty of spiritual perception, are yet, if they are to be made fruitful, subject to being investigated and co-ordinated by the reasoning faculty. Man has no

right either on the one hand to deny their reality, or on the other to refuse to endeavour to understand them. Religion as a fact of human consciousness is a proper subject for scientific investigation.

Yet far more important, at least for the present writer, than the scientific investigation of religion as a fact of human consciousness, is that other problem, how, when scientific investigation shall have done its work, to apply the results to the advancement of mankind. If, indeed, mankind were not thereby advanced, where were the advantage of any religious study or of any religion? Given the discovery of any spiritual law, however simple, then the immediate problem is how to take advantage of that discovery. Who shall put it into action and apply it? What motive shall incite mankind to act upon it? The barren discovery of a law of spiritual action would be a tantalising prospect if there came not with it the discovery of some means of putting it into operation. For the development of character in man there must be some development of motive within him. If that development of motive took the shape of a mere code of morals or a mere declaration of beliefs, how little would it avail! Creeds and codes are alike powerless in the face of the complex perversity of human nature. Not there will the potent motive arise.

But in this strait the religious faculty again comes to our aid, since it has from the first borne into the soul of man a conviction—a conviction not to be explained away by the ethnologist or the psychologist—that the entity outside ourselves but in which we share, the invisible, indestructible,

immaterial environment is something in which we live and move and have our being ; in other words, that it is the supreme essential in that which constitutes life : that itself is a life. The elemental qualities of pity and joy, of justice and mercy, cannot by any possibility be predicated of actual matter, of abstract intellect, of codes or creeds ; and the very perception of these living qualities, particularly in moments of elevation, burns into us the conviction that the supreme entity in which we live and move and have our being must in some way, in some sense that we do not yet fully understand, have the quality which we ourselves have, of life, of existence as a living entity. And if, penetrated by this conviction, we in the limitations of human thought and language dare to frame as best we may, the phrase "the living God," who shall say us nay ? What, precisely, we shall further import into our ideas by exchanging the impersonal relative pronoun *which* into the more personal *whom*, when we say "in *whom* we live and move and have our being," we may perhaps not understand all at once. Personality is after all not so easily defined as some might think. But can we altogether dispense with the exchange ? I venture to think not : yet this is perhaps in some cases as much a matter of temperament as of conviction. But the gain, at least for the practical ends of religion, is immeasurable. By recognising, in this sense, a living personality in that supreme entity by which our own personalities are dominated from the cradle to the grave, and not our personalities only but the personalities of those who came before and of those who follow after, we find new and potent springs of

conduct. Of all ancient nations the Hebrews rose the highest in their conception of the Almighty. To the polytheists of neighbouring nations they were far superior. It may be admitted without damage to this statement that doubtless many of the Jews, possibly a majority, had no greater conception of Jahveh than as a purely tribal god: doubtless also, the conceptions denoted by the various names Elohim, El Shaddai, Jahveh and Emanuel were divergent, the adoption of usage of a new name corresponding to a new apprehension, or manifestation of the divinity. It is not without significance that we find in the books of the Bible traces of a tendency counter to the anthropomorphic ideas commonly attributed thereto; for while the account in Genesis of the actions of El Shaddai describes him in purely anthropomorphic terms, the language of the later writers, notably that of the Psalmists, is much less anthropomorphic, and in the New Testament the anthropomorphism has been almost completely transferred to the Son of man, the Son and sent of the Father, whilst the Paraclete or Comforter, a third presentation or hypostasis of the divine, is represented in language almost purely impersonal.¹

Amongst the religions of the world the particular group which collectively receives the name "Christianity" is distinguished by its adherents holding as a fundamental article, not accepted by the followers of the older religions, that some nineteen hundred years ago there was a specially human revelation of God to mankind, in the life

¹ Certain early divines were doubtful whether the Holy Spirit were not a feminine form of the Deity.

of Jesus Christ, who is variously represented to be a man in whom dwelt all the fullness of deity corporeally, a son of God, the unique son of God, God Himself made in the likeness of man. Endless controversy has raged about the attempts, mostly unwise and all futile, to state in precise terms the degrees in which humanity and divinity should be attributed to the unique person of Jesus Christ. It is very easy to dispute over a transcendental question such as this, and to discover at the end of the disputation that the very terms "humanity" and "divinity" ought to have been defined beforehand. Deity clothed in flesh, condescending to human form, voluntarily self-subjected to human limitations, is a conception that can scarcely be discussed without falling into metaphysical mazes of words; and any such discussion here would be idle. Vain questionings of this sort rose into importance in the Christian Church just as soon, and just so far, as the true spirit of Jesus Christ and the essence of his teaching was overlaid with sacerdotalism, and forgotten in the clash of political pretensions. At the culmination of the strife they rent the Christian Church in twain. The victorious party labelled itself and its particular metaphysical propositions as orthodox, and ever since has vindicated its political triumph by stigmatising as heretical all those followers of Christ who would not or could not concur in them. But the triumph recoiled on itself, since within the pale of orthodoxy there reared itself the vast fabric of hierarchical machinery to dominate men's beliefs, employing an ecclesiastical policy, often intensely unchristian, giving rise in the Middle Ages not only to wild traditional perversions

of history and teaching, but to hideous corruptions. No one can read Milman's History of Latin Christianity without an appalled sense of the utter paganism which ruled, as well as of the utter profligacy which accompanied, the triumph of the faith called "orthodox." The reactions which followed, first in Germany, then in England, later in France, were political quite as much as religious. The Reformation in Germany certainly turned more on political considerations than the corresponding movement in England. Both were alike a revolt against a dominant "Christianity" that was essentially unchristlike in spirit.

If the spectacle presented to-day by the immense variety of sects with conflicting doctrines and practices, all claiming to be the true exponents of Christianity, does not sicken the earnest seeker after truth, assuredly it saddens him. He finds the exclusiveness of the Particular Baptist as vain a pretence as the claim of the Roman or Anglican priest to grant remission and absolution for sin. The doctrines of the Plymouth Brethren and the Salvation Army are as impossible for him as the dogmas of the Greek Church. The shining eloquence which draws to the City Temple tends as little to his edification as the ethical paradoxes of South Place Institute. He looks in vain to Saint Peter's or to Saint Paul's; for at Saint Peter's there is a shrivelled pallid old man playing at holding the keys of heaven, yet himself ruled by the Curia; and at Saint Paul's there is a gorgeous performance attended by comfortable canons who are not exactly like the fishermen of Galilee. The spirit of the real Peter and of the real Paul are

conspicuously not there. Yet he feels in a vague instinctive way that, unless the old books are all lies, Jesus Christ did somehow manage to convince the men of His time—and the conviction wrought in Peter and in Paul and made them what they were—that there was an ideal of human life not impossible to be striven for ; that there was a possibility of the glory of the divine life entering into and ennobling a human soul ; that God would indeed in some sense dwell with men upon the earth even though the Heaven of Heavens could not contain Him.

What the earnest seeker after truth desires to find is some not-unreasonable presentation of this psychological entity, dimly grasped by the primitive consciousness of man, this Most High to whom the human soul can cry in the hour of need, this Eternal and Immortal whose children all men are. He seeks to know more, if more can be known within the power of words to express, of the relation of Jesus Christ to the rest of mankind, and to learn how and in what way the coming of Jesus Christ was a manifestation of the divine. He wants to discover, thinks indeed that there may be some clue to it in the life-story of Jesus Christ, a pattern, which can be put up before the soul, of a true life. He longs for some influence, some intense conviction, that shall raise him out of his dull self into a higher plane of thought and feeling such as in his few moments of occasional spiritual exaltation he has felt to be possible. Can it be that it is possible in any continuous or permanent way to live on that higher plane, where the motives are purified, where the vision is made keen, where the heart becomes more sympathetic ?

What he is seeking is that not-impossible Christianity which the Churches and the Churchmen have done their utmost to destroy ; that religion, not impossible to men of thought, knowledge, and reverence, which noble and elevating as it may be even in those who admit no Christ into it, becomes not merely noble and elevating, but fruitful and progressive in those who have found in the self-sacrificing example of Jesus Christ the motive and mainspring to all that makes for good in their own lives.

Some there are who cannot yet go so far on the road, who are earnest seekers after truth and are neither religionists nor non-religionists, and yet are not indifferent. Some who while they admit the existence as a true objective entity of the spiritual immanence, non-material, non-physical, in which we live and move and have our being, are not able to conceive it as possessing the attributes of life or self-consciousness, or consequently of personality. To such therefore, by whatever name they call it—the First Cause, or the Absolute—it does not appeal as a Person. But because they are to this extent atheistic, it by no means follows that they are irreligious or to be set down in vulgar phrase as Atheists ; impersonal theists would indeed better describe their attitude, if indeed it were desirable to label them by a name. For such, and they are not few, though the attitude is one of unstable equilibrium which many do not long maintain, the writer has the sincerest sympathy. Having himself at moments passed through this stage of religious thought, he realises how far this reverent and deeply religious refusal of assent to a “personality” which

is undemonstrable by intellectual processes, but equally incapable of being disproved by them, is itself due to the forced meanings put upon the term "person" by the dogmatic theologians. The reward of their dogmatism is the estrangement from the following of Christ of some of the purest and noblest of souls. A forced orthodoxy which has resulted in a "Christianity" impossible of acceptance by the man of thought and knowledge who would be true to himself and to the noblest that he finds within him, has much to answer for. Men talk of the present day as a time of irreligion and of empty churches. Yes, and the answer is not far to seek : in their zeal for orthodoxy the Churchmen have slain their Christ.

At the outset reference was made to the circumstance that while the possession of the religious consciousness is common to men generally, it is also peculiarly the possession of the individual soul. If one were to base a constructive scheme of religion upon the general religious experience of mankind, one would run the risk of ignoring that more potent factor as a motive of right doing, the religious experience of the individual soul. If, on the other hand, one were to found such a scheme upon individual experience, since individual experience differs widely, one would run the risk of building no coherent structure at all ; besides which there enters in, the inherent difficulty of transcendentalism. Much might be written, and indeed much has been written, on the nature and value of religious experience amongst men. Is it universal ? Of what real value is it as a basis of religion ? To what does it witness ? How far are its results

subject to criticism? All these are questions which might well command attention. Granting, however, the main facts (1) that the religious faculty exists widely, if not universally; (2) that this faculty does bring what are known as religious experiences to the individual; (3) that the law by which the growth of this faculty in the individual can be cultivated is known (of which more hereafter), then it at once follows that if any individual by right cultivation of this faculty trains it to greater insight than the majority of his fellows, his experiences (though they may be different from those of his fellows in being more frequent or more deep, or more wide) will not, if they are true experiences and not fictions of the imagination, run counter to the general body of religious experience; and even if in extreme cases they seem novel, yet they will be found to be a true development from the generality of religious experience. One cannot well see how in any other way a constructive scheme can be framed, which will admit of religion being based at once on the collective religious experience of the many and yet also upon the personal experience of the individual.

But if thus a due place is admitted for the personal religious experience of the individual, with its enormous influence upon him as a religion at first-hand, not learned second-hand from any other human creature, it must be self-evident that with the diversity of soul that exists between man and man, the spiritual perceptions of men must necessarily be widely divergent. The more intense and real the personal conviction of the inner light that has come into the soul, the more fatal the attempt

of mere organisers or organisations to force religious thought into set grooves. Into set grooves it persistently refuses to be forced. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the deep things of a man knoweth no man save the spirit of man that is in him. The inner conviction manifests itself in the man's actions, in his converse amongst men, in the quality of his citizenship, in his social relations. His life is ruled day by day and hour by hour by an unseen spiritual power. His life *is* his religion, whatever the particular language of his creed. Creed is not religion, orthodoxy is not religion, attendance at church is not religion. Religion is the life of God within the soul, directing and controlling conduct. It may lead some men to think out for themselves a definite creed—different creeds for different men. It may lead some to regular religious observances, day by day or week by week, of public worship; different observances for different men. But neither the subscription to a creed, nor the observance of public worship is in itself a *religio vite*, and both are, alas! compatible with utter indifference to the needs of the poor and the sick, with indifference to the obligations of social and moral order, with hideous moral corruption, and even with crime.

It is a false antithesis to put *orthodoxy* against *heterodoxy*. Orthodoxy being a system of religious doctrines, hammered out in the semi-political strifes of the first six centuries amid the bickerings of the ecclesiastics in their Councils, the true antithesis, as any Greek scholar will know, is *pseudodoxy*; for if *orthodoxy* means correct belief (according to the Councils of the fourth century) then any other *doxa* must be incorrect or false if judged by that

arbitrary and antiquated standard. *Heterodoxy* does not necessarily signify anything incorrect, it merely means the *doxa* or belief held by some other person, and the true antithesis to it is an *autodoxy* or opinion held by one's self. An *autodoxy* may be either correct or incorrect; it is merely one's own belief, and is usually considered right by its holder. In the evolution of religious beliefs it is found that occasionally a new belief—a *neodoxy*—arises and is repudiated at first because of its newness. In some cases it wins its way into acceptance, and becomes an *orthodoxy* in the eyes of those who hold it. Sometimes an accepted belief is found no longer tenable and is dropped—seldom formally—and becomes a *metadoxy* or *paleodoxy*. Of *neodoxies* that have arisen since the Acts of the Apostles were written there may be cited the doctrine of Sacrificial Atonement, the doctrine of The Trinity, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The first two have become *orthodoxies* in the Roman, Anglican, and Lutheran Churches, the third in the Roman Church only. But the first, though still an *orthodoxy*, is plainly destined to be dropped out (just as the doctrine of the descent into Hades held by all the Fathers has been dropped out) by all English Dissenters, if not in effect by all Protestant Churches. The present age is witnessing great changes in the passing of *orthodoxies* into *metadoxies*, and it is a sign of hope. For as it has been wisely said "it is much more vital that a man should believe a few things very strongly than that he should believe many things."

The theologians have examined and re-examined every corner of the official creeds; they have carefully labelled every particular departure from the

accepted fourth century *orthodoxies*, by the name of some particular "heresy." For them every departure from the arbitrary standard of sixteen centuries back can, as a result of their painful labours, at once be marked down as Gnostic, or Erastian, or Socinian, or Supralapsarian, or stigmatised by some other selected epithet. This edifying process of labelling every attempt at original thought or progress by a nickname, and then casting it out, has gone on so long that no one particularly troubles about it. Nevertheless it would be an instructive enquiry how many of the "orthodox" beliefs of to-day have passed through the process of being denounced as new heresies. It would be also instructive to examine how many of the present orthodoxies have outlived their meaning or their usefulness, and might well be abandoned as *metadoxies* that have had their day.

The object, however, of this chapter is not to pull down but to build up. It has been addressed almost entirely to those who find themselves outside the pale of an impossible "Christianity" earnestly seeking for a religion which shall be not impossible to men of thought, knowledge, and reverence. If the writer strives to suggest to others some sort of constructive framework it will be also his aim to proceed by other methods than those adopted by the theologians. He will try to avoid the use of all platitudes as arguments: as poetry they may be admissible. Nothing is proved by "quoting a text": that is to say it proves nothing to those who need the text itself to be proved to them. He will endeavour to avoid "isms" and "ists." Little is gained by such labelling, save prejudices from which

escape is difficult. In his view true religion is not concerned with "isms," that is with professions ; nor with "ists," that is with professors. True religion is a question of effort, not of talk ; of suffering, not of disputing ; of action, not of creed ; of obedience, not of ceremonial ; of conduct, not of dogma. Dogma as a basis of vital religion is dead. Let us have a religion of life.

CHAPTER III

Nisi Dominus Aedificaverit

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.”—Ps. cxxvii. 1.

UPON every man who has found that in sheer sincerity of heart and mind the temples of orthodoxy afford him no satisfactory habitation, there is laid the necessity of discovering other tabernacles of faith. Whether he will find them ready-made, or at least adaptable to his service, or whether he will have to build them afresh from the foundations, may depend both on himself and on the features of his spiritual environment, as well as on the incidents, past and present, of his spiritual pilgrimage. It may even be that he will have to reconsider the foundations, if he has cause to think that there is fundamental error in the bases of a religion that has become for him untenable. Many pure and true souls who for truth's sake have had to wander for a time in the wilderness have found it difficult enough to enter into the ready-furnished edifices of any of the established creeds, and have had to content themselves for a time with the shelter of some despised and neglected prospector, until such time as they

could little by little build their own tabernacle in the service of truth.

In other words, the seeker after truth comes sooner or later, and not suddenly nor in one stage only, to the point where he must at least begin to define for himself the outlines of his religious faith. He cannot for ever be renouncing untenable beliefs: he cannot dwell in a twilight of negations. Life demands something more positive, by which to blossom into fruition. Constructive effort, be it ever so simple, is at least a good gymnastic for the soul's health. It is better to build than to cast down: and if casting down has become a righteous duty, how much more is that of reconstruction?

But there are two chief conditions which must ever underlie any and every attempt at reconstruction of religious faith, and without which the labour will be in vain. These prime conditions are that the work shall be carried on in a spirit of reverence and a spirit of discernment. The responsibility of the task is great: all levity or insincerity of purpose will be disastrous. There is no place in the temple of truth for plausible shams or for vain-glorious ornament. He who builds must know how weak he is, and take measures to work within his strength: must learn how limited he is, and keep strictly within his own capacity. He must patiently test the materials, so that he may not misuse them in his building; must be simple and sincere enough to learn, and, having learned, be ready to act in accordance with the truth so far as it has been made plain to him.

"Except the Lord build the house," was the language of old time, "they labour in vain that

build it." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" is a foundation principle as true now as in Hebrew times. But reverence is not the only prime necessity, there is a second just as vital, and in these days more to be prized because more rare—clarity of thought. Of all the gifts of God to be desired in matters of religion there is none more urgent than that which seems so often to be conspicuously denied to the theologian—clarity of thought. Clarity of speech, too, is a good gift and a desirable one; but the clear-cut diction is of little use if the thought to be expressed is itself crude or turbid. To-day the study of logic, the study of the necessary laws of thought, is out of fashion. Brilliant paradox and inconsequent specialism have infected our best writers, and the trail of journalism lies on the second best. Pertinent and sober reasoning is flouted by the impertinent corruscations of the smart litterateur. Small help indeed has the twentieth century brought to the earnest seeker after truth.

Of all such vain stuff the truth seeker must purge himself. Likewise must he avoid the well-intentioned but crude divagations of the new school of sentimental philosophers who mix physics and psychics for us in facile and graceful oratory. Because radium emits mysterious corpuscles, or ether-waves are found to be generated by electric sparks, we are not bound to deduce therefrom the probability that our dead friends can speak to us through a planchette, or that the doctrine of the Trinity can be developed from the triple conservation of matter, of energy, and of ether. To the truly spiritual man who is groping after the eternal

truth, these new fashions in philosophy are as unsatisfying as the old atheisms which they have replaced. Not of such confused pabulum will much result, save fits of spiritual indigestion. No, there is needed something much simpler, much more vital and human, much deeper. The human heart—and religion, vital and human, is an affair of the heart—will not be satisfied with vague religiosities. The instinct for worship cries aloud for something that is not an abstraction. And if the foundations of the temple are well and truly laid, faith, the working principle by which the religious instinct emerges, will sooner or later justify a superstructure.

Reverence and clarity of thought are then necessary for any constructive work. Clarity of thought implies indeed a certain degree of intellectual training—enough at least to enable one to be consistent in the right use of words and to be able to deduce a logical consequence from its antecedents without falling into fallacy. To say that the right use or the rules of logic is necessary for any constructive religious thought is not by any means to shut up the kingdom of grace to the logical thinker. On the contrary, the proposition is that in the kingdom of grace only he who is logical can be of permanent use as a pioneer in constructive work. Heaven was never won by bad logic, though it may have been attained in spite of it. But no man's contribution toward the future temple of truth will be permanent if it is supported on the untenable basis of a defective syllogism.¹ We may, in the tentative

¹ Logical accuracy of thought, the process of correctly using the intellect, is a gift to be cultivated, and the more earnestly to be cultivated, because all intellectual power is a divine gift. In religious matters,

stage, be compelled to accept propositions that rest on no logical basis at all—but on some quite other basis: we may even be obliged on rare occasions to accept temporarily two propositions that are mutually incompatible. But, if we do so, it must be on the frank recognition of their temporary nature, and with an intention to lay one or both of them aside so soon as we shall have adequate data to judge between them. There is such a duty as sacred suspense of judgment. The acceptance, as working hypotheses, of matters which we know to be unproven or even defective, may well be a temporary duty also, at times.

It is necessary, then, for progress that with reverence and intelligence we examine the foundations of faith and see that they be truly laid: that our superstructure shall not be reared on a quicksand or on a foundation of straw or stubble. And here at once we shall be told by those who have never thus exercised their intelligence, and who are possessed by the fixed idea that “the Church” (meaning their particular one) has the sole right to be considered the Church of Christ; that “other foundation can no man lay” than that of “the Church.” Wait a little! We must admit no platitudes which beg the question. Those who have not the patience to pursue the development of the present thesis, and those who have never got so far as to discover that there is a problem as to the foundations of personal religion (and how to face

however, the power of logic is always of a negative sort. It can enable the thinker to reject the false if the false be due to inaccurate thinking. But logic can never itself establish the true. To suppose so was the mistake of the Schoolmen. Often, if not always, truth comes to the soul by a totally different process—vision.

that problem ?) are requested to lay this book aside. It is not written for those who are spiritually rich and increased with goods, for the satisfied or the self-satisfied. Those who are not satisfied with the orthodox position that whatever "the Church" chooses to put forth is therefore necessarily true, will not be deterred from the quest after truth by being told "other foundation can no man lay than that which has been laid." They will at once ask : What was that foundation ? Is it that which orthodoxy now represents as being the foundation ?

Let us come to closer quarters in this matter and, accepting the historic ground of the general accuracy of the Synoptic Gospels, simply ask what foundation *did* Christ lay ? Probably theologians of all schools will at once recur to the scene at Cæsarea Philippi, when Peter responding for himself and his fellow disciples said : "Thou art the Christ" (Mark viii. 30) ; "the Christ of God" (Luke ix. 21) ; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the ever-living God" (Matt. xvi. 16). The reply of Jesus was : "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and that upon this rock will I build my church [*καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*], and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." What then was "this rock" One has only to look back at the preceding context to ascertain. The spiritual intuition, not revealed by human nature, that the Jesus whom they had been following was indeed "the Christ of God," was the foundation on which the calling into His chosen company was based. We

know that for at least a century the simple baptismal formula required of the convert on his admission to the Church was this : "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This was all. That the term "rock" has also been applied to the Holy Scriptures, to Peter, and to Christ Himself, does not alter the fact. The Church of Christ was by Himself set upon the foundation of the spiritual and intuitive recognition of His Divine Sonship. If any Church to-day regards itself as built on any other foundation, upon it rests the onus of disproving the historic accuracy of the Synoptic narratives. For ourselves, at least for present purposes, we accept that historic accuracy as being adequately established.

When a temple of truth is to be reared, it is just as necessary to test the materials of construction as to look to the foundations. In building a structure that is to be lasting, no materials of doubtful permanency can be used. In an age when men had not learned to discern the perishable from the permanent, to sift hard fact from poetic fancy, nor even saw any use in such discrimination, they builded with such material as seemed to them best suited to adorn the fabric. With simple and reverential piety they accepted as fact much that we know now to be of the nature of myth. With eyes aflame in the enthusiasm of the good news that had come to them, they saw halos of glory around the heads of the saints of God ; in pious ardour, and with Oriental wealth of imagery, they handed on by word of mouth the descriptions of events that had been witnessed ; and in perfect sincerity they exaggerated, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, the features

of the narrative, so that the tradition which survived in the manuscripts could not but outgrow its original facts. How difficult, how impossible in some instances, it is now to recover the actual facts embedded in the Synoptic narratives, only those know who have had experience in the difficult work of tracing back any historical event and disentangling it from the inevitable accretions due to the sincere piety of the successive narrators through whom it has survived. In the immense mass of criticism which has been brought to bear, particularly during the last half-century, much has been written neither wisely nor reverently : but much has been achieved of permanent value—both positively and negatively. Positively, in establishing the genuine historicity of a very substantial body or nucleus ; negatively, in showing unmistakably how certain points of the Gospels are additions of later date unknown to the reputed writers, or are pious glosses of copyists and commentators which have been from time to time incorporated and handed down.

Every seeker after truth should be devoutly thankful that, while so much has been accomplished, while there is no finality attained in scholarship or in discernment, and while future recensions will indisputably become necessary, there is now at least a clear line open. No one is under any necessity to employ in the building of the temple of truth any of the materials which when tested by the best scholarship of the time are found to be doubtful. Better build less, of sound materials only, than build more, of doubtful stuff. The truest temple of faith will not need to be buttressed up by doubtful credenda.

On one point the scientific enlightenment of to-day leads to a perfectly clear issue. In the ages of primitive man, a curiously exaggerated importance was attached to abnormalities and wonders. The idiot was thought to be inspired; the hunchback to be endowed with special virtues, so that to touch his hump brought luck, or rendered health to the diseased. Comets and new stars were portents of evil or good. Anything that happened out of the ordinary run of nature, or of an unusual character was of a specially divine—or in some cases diabolic—origin. Men attached to signs and wonders the most astonishing virtues, and the greed for the miraculous was the greater in proportion to their ignorance. It was impossible—and the tendency survives even to our day—for any striking character, politician, hero, or saint, to move amongst his fellows without the association with him of supernatural events, or the attribution to him of supernatural powers. In uncritical ages anything was accepted as true which helped to magnify the greatness of the great. The more improbable or unnatural the event, the better proof it was held to afford of his greatness.

But the age of uncritical and unreasoning hero-worship is past; and mankind has been slowly learning that credulity is not faith. Whatever the Christians of the first century may have thought—in their particular stage of enlightenment—to be right for them, thinking men of the twentieth century must be true to the light that is theirs, and act with perfect honesty of thought. It is impossible in the twentieth century to build a religion upon miracles, or upon the narratives of

reputed miraculous events chronicled in an age of credulity, if no materials exist by which to test the facts from which they sprang. If it is impossible to separate fact from accretion, or history from folklore, then just so far are we compelled to hold back from accepting any such things as proven. If, on the other hand, we are able to discern the fact through the myth, and to discover the history amid the poetic embellishments of the narrator, then, so far, we are not only free to accept them : nay more, as seekers after truth we are bound to make the best use of the truths so far ascertained, and to use them constructively for the benefit of those who come after us.

How little could those of whom we read in the Gospels suppose that the Jesus of Nazareth who moved amongst them was organising a vast Ecclesia. Nor is that our task. He who, on however small a scale, would imitate the Master in bringing in the Kingdom of Heaven, will find his life filled with humbler and simpler duties. Walk with men in the Garden or in the Grove. Meditate in the Desert, and return to feed the hungry. Talk with the reaper in the field, or with the woman at the wayside well. Join the tramp on the road, or discuss with the learned in their long robes. Gather with your friends in an upper room to break bread in the evening. If you are filled with the spirit of the Master, all these little acts of human converse are contributions towards the building up of the Church of Christ. You may not thus reconstruct a theology ; you may be doing something far more vital for religion, pure and undefiled. For in the economy of Christ's teaching the vision of God is not reserved

for the accomplished theologian : it is accorded to the pure in heart.

The Gospel of the Kingdom which Jesus preached was in outward form a defiance of the orthodoxy in which He had Himself been brought up. He announced a religion independent alike of the national Temple at Jerusalem and of the century-old worship on Mount Gerizim. Ignoring the entire ritual of blood sacrifices and burnt offerings, He led His disciples little by little to the conception of a spiritual temple, a heavenly kingdom into which those should enter who came in the spirit of the little child. Not an institution or an organisation, but a vast spiritual fellowship did he originate, penetrating all society, as the leaven leavens the whole loaf. That is the *ecclesia*, the Church which Jesus founded, not the hierarchical institution which has appropriated the name. The Christ-follower who would do his share toward extending the kingdom of Christ must proceed in the spirit of his Master, filling his life with the humbler duties of human fellowship, exercising that "great and heroic virtue" the constant fidelity *in rebus parvis*, that doing common things in a perfect way which is the best perfection of the religious man. In thinking of the ordering of his spiritual life and the framing of his soul's tabernacle he remembers, it may be, the ancient injunction : See thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. Which mount ? he asks himself. Is it Sinai, or Carmel, or Olivet, or the Mons Vaticanus ? Surely the answer comes : That mount which the feet of the Master Himself have trodden ; not Sinai, not Carmel, nor another.

Every one of experience in religious matters will admit that there is great variety in the elements of religion which appeal to different individuals. To the young the matters which count are different from those which the aged set value upon. For the strong religion holds a somewhat different place in life from that which it holds for the weak: it appeals to the simple in a different way from that in which it appeals to the learned. In brief, there is a diversity in the materials that go to the building of the temple if that temple is to be a home for many conditions of soul. Furthermore, as the human race grows, and its religious perceptions accumulate, as revelation progresses, so does the structure of its religious beliefs take modified forms. Any system of religion which ignores this development is destined to disappear. The temple-builder who fails to allow for extensions in the ultimate structure may be sure that sooner or later his work must be pulled down to make way for more stately mansions. Even for the needs of his own soul he must admit the possibility of a larger growth: the creeds that define inevitably become creeds that confine.

But if we would build truly we must be willing to build slowly: to test our work as it proceeds. We must be prepared to build in co-operation with other workers; to merge individuality of effort in the common good. We must, above all, be willing to be guided by experience, and to take warning by the verdicts of history. Let us beware of the spiritual pride that embarks on an ambitious scheme: little by little are the stones of the spiritual house fitted into their places.

Solemn indeed is the responsibility of the

builder's task when amidst the decaying futilities around him he sets stone upon stone ; and well may he re-echo the antiphonal welling up from the ages :—

Except the Eternal build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

CHAPTER IV

Resurrection

SHOULD any one desirous of learning the truth ask what was the central fact around which the development of the early Christian Church ranges itself, the answer which must in accord with truth be given, may possibly cause some surprise. The ideas which moved the Apostles and leaders in the first inspiration of the new faith have for many centuries been overlaid by ideas of another order. For while the immense spiritual activities of the Apostles centred around one supreme and dominating fact, the whole body and superstructure of later Christian doctrines, both in the Catholic and the Protestant sections, have centred around another fact. Surprising as this statement may be, a little honest enquiry will show that such is the case ; and closer research will confirm it. The creeds of the orthodox Catholic Churches, the confessions of the dissenting bodies, Calvinistic and Arminian alike, all hinge around a pivot other than that about which the faith of the first Christians turned. High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, and Free Church are all in the same case : they have all made the same departure from Primitive Christianity.

For whereas the central point of all these as they

are to-day, in their teachings and systems, is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and the Atonement effected as they hold by that death, the central point of the Primitive Church was quite other. Let me guard myself here by saying that some orthodox theologians would dispute the accuracy of the statement, and would declare that with them the central point is not the death of Christ but His Birth, not the Atonement but the Incarnation. Be it so : but these very theologians regard in practice the sacrament of the Eucharist, whether called Mass or not, as the most sacred and necessary of the ordinances ; and that sacrament is nothing if it be not a commemoration of the death of Jesus on the cross. Even if we admit their contention, it does not touch the case, because the central fact dominating the faith, the life, the works, the words of the first Christians was neither the birth nor the death of Christ.

The great central fact was the Resurrection.

That this was indeed so, shall be presently made clear ; but first let us dispose of two objections that may be raised. It may be said that had Christ not died there could have been no resurrection from the dead, and that the latter implies the former. This is an obvious truism ; but it in no way disposes of the point. It is equally true that Christ could not have died if He had not been born ; and yet many people attribute to His death a very different efficacy from that which they attribute to His birth. A second objection is that the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord are all bound up together in one scheme of redemption. Admitting the proposition as a proposition, and without stopping

to enquire here what an objector might precisely mean by the term "scheme," it may be at once replied that whether it be so or not, this has not hindered pious believers in one place or another from setting forth with special emphasis some one or other of these four facts as the all-important one that overshadowed the others. And, whether they held this proposition or not, the early Christians were not hindered from so laying an almost exclusive emphasis. And that on which they laid this emphasis was neither birth nor death but resurrection.

Let us begin with the Acts of the Apostles. It opens with an account of the forty days, and then at once proceeds to the narrative of the election of an Apostle to fill the place of Judas. The hundred and twenty disciples called together by Peter met to select one of the company to "be ordained" (as the old version has it) or to "become" (as the revised version has it) "a witness with us of His resurrection." There is no mistaking what was in this procedure stated to be the essential. Peter's address on the Pentecostal day is equally emphatic when he maintained that the resurrection of the Lord had triumphed over the crime of the crucifixion, claiming that thus He had fulfilled the prophecy of the patriarch David, who "foreseeing this spoke of the resurrection of Christ" that "neither was He left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption," adding: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." Again, in the speech of Peter at the porch called Solomon's, he said: "But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you and killed the Prince of Life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof

we are witnesses." The language shows that he regarded the crucifixion as a shameful and abominable crime; the resurrection as the starting point for the new evangel. His language was unmistakable to his hearers, for the immediate effect was, we are told, to bring down upon him and the other disciples forcible arrest by the priests and the captain of the temple, because "they taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." In Peter's defence the main point was that what he had done had been done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, "whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead." Following this, we read how "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul," and that "with great power gave the Apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The phrase "multitude of them that believed," merits a passing attention in view of the narrow meaning sometimes put on the term "believer." Clearly, here at least, belief has nothing to do with this or that specific doctrine of modern orthodoxy as formulated in the creeds. "Them that believed" means them that believed the teachings of Peter and the rest as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Peter was put in prison; but an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and gave the apostles a definite command what they were to say to the people. The command is significant; the reference to the evangel of resurrection, and the absence of any reference to any gospel of salvation by death cannot be mistaken. "Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." When rearrested Peter reiterated, "We are witnesses of these things."

Later, when Peter was sent to proclaim the Gospel to the Roman centurion Cornelius, his message is still the same : the crucifixion is a detestable crime, the resurrection a mighty fact of which he and the other Apostles were the chosen witnesses.

If we pass on to the first recorded sermon of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia we find the same theme. "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him. And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet asked they of Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead, and He was seen for many days of them that came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem who are now His witnesses to the people." And he went on to say that His resurrection, of which he declared the "Good tidings," was the fulfilment of "the promise made unto the fathers," bringing in its train remission of sins and justification by belief in the news. It is not without interest to note in passing how Paul uses the very same word—"bringing good tidings"—as we find in the synoptic writers used of the teaching of Jesus and of the twelve, and which is often translated "preaching the gospel." Christ and His disciples preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God was come amongst men ; was at hand ; was within them. Now that He was risen, the good tidings were still a gospel of the Kingdom, made more near, more open than ever, now that Christ had

openly triumphed over death. This is Paul's good tidings. Again, at Thessalonica in the synagogue Paul reasoned with the Jews for three sabbath days, "opening and alleging that it behoves the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead." When he passed on to Athens the doctrine which he announced both in the synagogue to the Jews and in the Agora with those that met him every day, Epicureans and Stoics alike, was the same. We have their own account of it. "He seemeth to be a setter-forth of foreign divinities;" because he preached Jesus and the Resurrection. So when they set him in the midst of Areopagus purposely to expound to them his new teaching, he by a noble appeal to the primitive instinct of seeking after God, led them from pantheism to theism and wound up with a message of repentance and of judgment in righteousness "by the man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." The result, that "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead some mocked," makes it quite clear that the sum and substance of Paul's teaching, here as elsewhere, was what he himself had described at Antioch in Pisidia as the "gospel" of the resurrection. In the closing chapters of the Acts of the Apostles we have few further discourses of Paul: but we have his emphatic declarations before the Sanhedrin as to the vital point of his teaching—"touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." When defending himself before Felix, Paul reverted to this declaration as embodying his sole offence, and he appealed to the "things which are according to the law, and which

are written in the prophets," as justifying a belief in that which was now deemed heretical—the resurrection of the dead. Again, when Festus laid Paul's case before Agrippa, all he could state as to the charge against him was that his accusers had certain questions against him of their own superstition, "and of one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Paul's final defence before Agrippa was a vindication of himself by the personal revelation of the heavenly vision, and his divine call as a minister and witness. "I stand," he concluded, "unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come: how that the Christ is subject to suffering (εἰ παθητὸς), how that He first by resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the nations." The last glimpse we have of the great Apostle leaves him dwelling unmolested in his own hired dwelling in Rome "preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness."

From beginning to end of the Acts of the Apostles there is not a single direct reference to any redemption by sacrifice or to any supposed plan of salvation by the sacrifice of a victim.

To sum up: the gospel as preached by both Peter and Paul was consistently a gospel of the resurrection: a gospel to which all ideas of election, of reprobation, of substitution, of vicarious sacrifice, of blood offering to propitiate an angry Deity, are entirely foreign. It was essentially a gospel of life unto life, in which the murder of Jesus took its place as a hideous and criminal

incident, over which the greatness of God had signally triumphed.

If we read the Epistles by the light of this most vital and fundamental fact, we shall see that, though sometimes obscured by special arguments addressed to particular times or circumstances, or by secondary issues, their essential teaching is, with some exceptions, the same. The exceptions are the first Epistle of John, the Second Epistle of Peter, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The second Epistle of Peter presents, indeed, nothing that is inconsistent with the position of the first Apostles as narrated in the Acts, though it deals with other points; but the Epistle of John makes a wide departure in introducing the Logos-doctrine of the pre-existent Word. It is generally conceded that this doctrine was a later development, which for at least the first half-century of the existence of the primitive Church formed no part of its teachings. And we need not dwell on the particular effect of putting forward this conception as the basis of Christian belief. It is enough for us to consider John's view of the intent and meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus. That meaning is far from being clear, since the terms used are not clearly defined, and the expositions are both mystical and incomplete, as if intended to supplement some oral exposition of a more fundamental kind. But it is clear that John conceives the object of Christ's coming upon earth to be not merely to reveal the Father and to regenerate man, but also to be an intermediary, for He is described as being sent as a propitiation or mercy-seat for the sins of men. "Ye know," he says, "that He was

manifested to take away our sins." "He is the propitiation (or mercy-seat) for our sins." But such removal of sin-guilt is to be conditional upon the character and conduct of the human person, and its declaration begins with an "if": "If we walk in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The language is transcendental, metaphorical, and the metaphor overwrought. Yet John nowhere suggests that there was any want of reconciliation on the part of God. How far this is from the majority of modern theologians! "Believe," they say, "in the atoning death, the substitutional sufferings of Christ, and your sins shall all be unconditionally washed away, and you shall be saved." John, on the other hand, says explicitly, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us." And he expressly lays down that, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (or mercy-seat) for our sins." And again, "whosoever believeth in Him" (not in His death, or His blood, or His corpse) "shall have eternal life." This brings us to consider what these allusions of John to redemption and reconciliation mean. Eternal life is to be given as the result of Christ's death and resurrection, but not as any buying off of condemnation, or sacrifice offered up for sins of others. What, then, do the allusions to redemption mean? Unquestionably they refer to the then current opinion that the souls of men at death must all descend into an under-world, a Hades, the abode of spirits where all men, from Adam downwards, had gone. We may see traces of it in the passage in the first

Epistle of Peter about Jesus going down to preach to the spirits in prison. Into that Hades, so the tradition of the Church ran, Christ had descended, being, however, by His Divine nature able to escape, to loose the bonds of death, the first of men to return to the light, bringing Adam with him¹ after an imprisonment of four thousand years. By being the first to rise again into life, He had overcome death, and thus proved to men that God had removed the penalty of sin. In this way His resurrection demonstrated the completeness of the reconciliation or atonement. It was a redemption not in any sense by the innocent suffering for the guilty. But its essence lay herein that Jesus, having devoted His life freely for the sake of others, had by His triumph even over death, revealed the divine and crowning gift of eternal life, converting it from a dim speculation into a glorious certainty. Any one who will re-read the Epistle of John with this key to his meaning will not fail to see how much its language gains in force. Not until he has grasped this key will he realise the fullness of the Apocalyptic declaration, "I am the first and the last and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

With the Epistle to the Hebrews we need not stay. It is avowedly an *ex parte* argument, written by one who to the Jews became a Jew that he might gain the Jews. The whole of its chapters that deal in the language of the temple ritual with sacrifices and sin offerings, may, along with rites, ceremonies,

¹ Four thousand three hundred and two years, according to Dante. (*Paradiso*, Canto vi. 119).

and beliefs, now discarded as superstitious, be left with reverence on the same shelf as other relics of Hebrew origin ; things right and appropriate in their time and in their place, but having now no significance other than as a lesson of that which has been, which has served its good purpose, and which in the ordering of Divine Wisdom has been superseded.

But what, it may be asked, of the Epistles of Paul ? Paul, too, shared the current conception as to the under-world ; and with him the term " death " is used often to connote not merely the dissolution of the physical body from the soul, but the imprisonment of the soul in Hades. According to this view Adam was by his sin compelled to sojourn in the under-world, and all mankind sharing his sin were associates in his fate. From that fate the resurrection of Christ released mankind. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive again—revivified. If any one living close to the time of Paul could tell us of his meaning, that is what he would say. That is, in fact, what Origen explicitly does say in his commentary on Paul's words, " the wages of sin is death," explaining that here " the under-world in which souls are detained is called death." When Paul announces that " Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," it is clear he does not mean physical death—because Christians must still all die : Christ has not abolished physical dissolution. Neither does Paul mean by death merely " sin " and its attendant separation from divine happiness. He means that our descent and detention in the under-world, in which Paul and all

his hearers believed, are abolished, and our heavenly destination made near. "Not that we desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life." The Kingdom of Heaven is by Christ's resurrection literally "at hand." Could words be more emphatic than these which Paul addressed to the Corinthians: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain, ye are yet in your sins"? Plainly, all the orthodox modern theologians notwithstanding, Paul presents as the one efficacious feature in Christ's mission of redemption, the resurrection, not the crucifixion. The dying was the mere preliminary to the all-important rising. Jerome, commenting on the passage on the victory of Christ over the sting of death and the strength of sin, says: "We cannot and dare not interpret this victory otherwise than by the resurrection of the Lord." The Pauline conception of redemption is this: Christ voluntarily died in order that by His rising again He might convince men that the Father would freely deliver them from the bondage of death in the under-world. For our sins Christ died, and was buried, and rose again the third day—are not these Paul's own words? Christ was delivered to death because of our offences, and was raised again because of our justification. His rising was the assurance of life for us. The Calvinistic misinterpretation of these utterances completely misses the mark and does violence to the construction of the words. Paul makes no appeal to us to believe in the death of Christ—everybody believed that He had been put to death. Paul makes no appeal to us to believe in the atoning sacrifice of

Christ : the atonement by sacrifice was one of those Jewish ideas which he had had to put behind him in pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call. What Paul did emphatically say was this : "*If thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*" Believe in the resurrection with all that is involved, the destruction of the fear of death, the triumph over Hades, the victory over sin and bondage ; believe that as the Lord Jesus triumphed and rose, thou also mayest triumph and rise—that is salvation unto thee, a gospel of life unto life. When He had first descended into the lower parts of the earth, He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive—leading out a multitude of captives. What can these words mean¹ if not that already set forth ? And they are but an echo of Christ's own words, "I if I be lifted up will draw all men after Me" ? The unperceptive gloss of the recorder who added, "this He said signifying what kind of death He would die" has confused our Lord's real meaning.

¹ Alger, *History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 284.

"A prominent feature in the belief of Paul, and one deserving of distinct notice . . . is the supposition that Christ was the first person, clothed with humanity and experiencing death, admitted into heaven. Of all the hosts who had lived and died, every soul had gone down into the dusky under-world. There they were all in durance, waiting for the Great Deliverer. In the splendours of the realm over the sky, God and His angels dwelt alone. That we do not err in ascribing this belief to Paul we might summon the whole body of the Fathers to testify in almost unbroken phalanx, from Polycarp to St. Bernard. The Roman, Greek, and English Churches still maintain the same dogma. But the apostle's own plain words will be sufficient for our purpose. 'That Christ should suffer and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead.' 'Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.' 'He is the beginning, the first-born from among the dead, that among all He might have the pre-eminence.' 'God raised up Christ from among the dead, and set

Lastly, the primitive Church instituted the observance of the Lord's Day, to be held as a day of rejoicing for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It was to be held not on the Sabbath, with all the deadly inertia of Jewish thought which clung to Sabbatical observances; but instead, on "the first day of the week." This observance of Sunday as a Christian feast-day perpetuates the simple rejoicings of the first Christians in having found the gospel of life. The observance of Fridays as commemorative of Christ's death was a much later institution introduced by the monkish advocates of the gospel of death.

We have seen what the teaching of the Apostles was; and it is not seriously disputed that for nearly two centuries the Church continued to be a Church of the resurrection. Life, not death, was its central thought. The crude frescoes on the catacombs of Rome, silent but uncontrovertible witnesses of the purity of the early faith, teem with allusions to the

Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above every principality and might and dominion.' The last words refer to the different orders of spirits supposed by the Jews to people the aerial regions below the heaven of God. 'God hath' (already in our anticipating faith) 'raised us up together with Christ and made us to sit in heavenly places with Him.' These testimonies are enough to show that Paul believed Jesus to have been raised up to the abode of God, the first man ever exalted thither, and that this was done as a pledge and illustration of the same exaltation awaiting those who believe. 'If we be dead with Christ we believe we shall also live with Him.' And the apostle teaches that we are not only connected with Christ's resurrection by the outward order and sequence of events, but also by an inward gift of the Spirit. He says that to every obedient believer is given an experimental 'knowledge of the power of the resurrection of Christ,' which is the seal of God within him. . . . 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but He hath revealed them unto us, for we have received His Spirit.'"

resurrection : the cross and symbols of the crucifixion are practically absent. Augustine had not yet riveted upon the Church the fetters of his terrible doctrines. Constantine had not yet thrown his sword into the fray where rival creed-makers and creed-mongers strove for authority and political power. Christianity, though drifting away from the devoted simplicity of the primitive Church, had not yet dashed upon the rocks of metaphysics. The Church was not yet separated into Trinitarians and Unitarians : there was room for both in the gospel of the resurrection. Or rather, so long as the gospel of the resurrection as preached by the Apostles, and the gospel of the kingdom as preached by Christ, were upheld and believed in, any difference of opinion between Christians as to the particular share of the work of redemption to be assigned to any particular manifestation of the Deity would well have seemed blasphemous and irreligious. It was only after the gospel of the resurrection had become overclouded by the man-made doctrines of sacrificial atonements and plans of salvation by death, that any such disputations could prevail. Christ had arisen ; man might arise. Christ had died in order that He might rise again. Man-seeking union with God must die to sin in order that He might arise in a new life of righteousness. In his wretchedness and sin, praying how he might be delivered from the body of this death, he received the assurance of resurrection through Jesus Christ the risen Lord. Since the believer, then, was risen with Christ, or had learned through Christ the possibility of the new life, he must seek those things which were above. He must set his affections on things

above, not on things on the earth. He had died with Christ, and his life was thenceforth hid with Christ in God. Christ when He went away had sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in men's hearts, to abide with them. The certainty that Christ was a living Christ and not a dead Christ wrought a perpetual consciousness of His presence and power in the soul. Paul could pour out his soul in prayer "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, if that by any means I also may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

This is not the occasion on which to discuss the narratives of the evangelists in which the resurrection of our Lord is recounted. Neither is this the place to touch on the many points that have presented difficulties to earnest seekers after truth, in chief the question of the corporeal or non-corporeal nature of the person of Christ as he appeared during the forty days. It is a question that has not always been handled either wisely or well. Theologian and critic have alike said many foolish things of it: and to the wisest and purest souls it must always present aspects of difficulty. We cannot look upon the risen Christ with the eyes of His wondering bewildered disciples, neither can we put ourselves back to the mind, the surroundings, the speech of those who wrote the records. Hence the precise meaning of their words we may never know. Of one thing we may be certain: the absolute and simple-hearted sincerity of conviction of the Apostles and disciples as to what they declared they had seen. Interpret the narrative as you please, explain the phenomena as you will, there yet remains an immovable and essential fact.

From the midst of a devoted and persecuted band of disciples the Master, whom they looked upon as divinely commissioned, nay as Himself divine, at whose hands they expected the fulfilment of national aspirations, the restoration of the Kingdom, the Master for whom they had left all, had disappeared. Arrested amidst a political clamour, ignominiously tortured and executed as a slave, He had died in their sight ; and with Him had vanished all their faith and hope ; their visions of aggrandisement were broken up, their eyes disillusioned as to His power and greatness—He had been powerless even to save Himself. Consider these men for whom the living Master had been all in all, and the state of stupefaction and blank despair to which His tragic end had reduced them.

And in the midst of all this *something happened*. Something which instantly, suddenly, unquestioningly, changed their utter misery and despair into the most confident and overpowering joy. Something in the strength of which they were transformed from craven and shamefaced followers, ready to deny their faith, into lion-hearted, uncompromising, indomitable leaders and evangelists. Something for which they were willing to go through fire and through water, to encounter suffering and death without flinching. Something that impelled them to go about everywhere to tell to others the amazing and joyful news.

What precisely that something was we may in this life never know, but they called it the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and it wrought in them and on them and through them as nothing has ever wrought in or on or through man before

or since. And in the strength of that intense inwrought conviction they went out and preached the gospel of the resurrection, and of the salvation of men by the faith of the risen Christ.

Ages passed, and the Church that they founded grew corrupt. The purity of the faith that they delivered was tainted by philosophical speculations, marred by political ambitions, stained with personal quarrels. Grievous wolves entered in, not sparing the flock. Judaising traditions from within, and paganising influences from without, did their disastrous work. The gospel of life was overshadowed by the gospel of death. Mediæval history shows us this degeneration, attested alike in literature, in philosophy, and in art. Men were exhorted to prepare to die instead of being shown how to live. The hideous symbols of death, the crucifix and the skull, effaced the earlier tokens of life and regeneration. The atrocious dogmas of eternal torment, of election and reprobation, grew into acceptance along with the metaphysical enigmas which were imposed as creeds. The clergy, arrogating to themselves the right to proclaim the absolution and remission of sins, and to hold through the ordinances the keys of heaven, magnified the tortures of the damned, and terrorised the people into subjection. Rites and ceremonies grew up in the place of the vital religion of character. Sacramentalism and sacerdotalism flourished, and a vast ecclesiastical hierarchy spread itself in dominance over all the civilised world.

Narrower and narrower grew the creeds; and even when the political and religious ferment of the fifteenth century culminated in the Reformation, the reform was political rather than religious,

ecclesiastical rather than spiritual, external rather than internal. The success of the Reformation was in one sense its failure, for the reformers did but fasten more closely than ever upon their followers the trammels of the traditional creeds. The Westminster Confession is as far from the gospel of the kingdom and from the gospel of the resurrection as is the Nicene Creed.

Once again the call resounds for the seeker after truth to break away from the traditions of men and return to a primitive and unsophisticated faith. Once again must man turn away from vanities, and at whatever cost seek the living Christ. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, . . . if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead"—that was Paul's prayer, and it may well be ours. Not in the gloom of dead and dying dogmas, not in the chaos of rituals, not in the charnel-house of Hebrew sacrifices, not amongst false ideals of sacerdotal and ecclesiastical order, is the gospel of life unto life to be sought. Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? He is not here; He is risen. Let us, too, arise.

CHAPTER V

Vision

“Where no vision is, the people perish.”

BRIEFLY put, the essence of all true religion is, that a man should so walk—that is, should so order his life and conduct—as seeing the Invisible. As seeing Him who is invisible, the majority of religionists would phrase it; but as already stated at the outset it would be wrong to deny a true religious instinct to those who honestly find themselves not to be in a position to attribute the idea of personality to the great First Cause. “Personal” or “impersonal” is not here the question at issue: for whether personal or impersonal, that First Principle in which we live and move and have our being is assuredly not to be seen or felt in any material or physical way by those human senses which bring to us our perception of the material world. For the right ordering of life and conduct the perceptions of the eye and of the ear avail not. Is it not, alas! true that the cultivation of Art, of Rhetoric, of Music, even in their highest walks is in some men’s natures entirely compatible with the deepest moral degradation? The perception which is necessary for the right ordering of

life is attained in no wise through the operation of the organs of sense, is equally attainable by him who is blind or deaf, as by him who has all the physical senses. Men of science have learned to locate the physical senses in certain physical organs ; and in truth much progress has been made in recent years in this direction, for besides the old "five senses " we possess the sense of musical pitch located in the fibres of Corti, the sense of rotation in the semi-circular canals of the ear, the sense of colour in the conoidal filaments of the retinal structure of the eye. Men of science have long ago speculated on the existence of a special organ of moral perception, and Descartes even suggested that the pineal "gland " of the brain was the seat of the soul. Modern physiology and modern psychology have alike failed to confirm any such specialised physical organ as the seat of the moral or spiritual perceptions, and the psychologist has been driven to attempt to account for the moral perceptions, the existence of which he certainly cannot deny, by some doctrine of cumulative experiences of the race, the perception or reception of which is transmitted by heredity. This is little more than another way of saying that all his attempts to give a physical explanation of hyperphysical facts have ended in failure. The facts remain. That men do possess a faculty of spiritual discernment that they, or at least that many of them, can "see" that which is invisible to the outward eye, and "hear" that which is inaudible to the outward ear ; that they have a something in their being which not only is competent at least in measure to distinguish between right and wrong, but also in some way sits in active judgment upon their actions,

influencing their motives and shaping their characters and destinies, are primary facts not to be got rid of by denial or dismissal as mental aberrations. To him who possesses the spiritual perception the facts are as real as eyesight is to the man who can see. No amount of denials by blind men will convince a man who possesses the faculty of eyesight that his vision is a hallucination. He possesses something that they have not, and which, save possibly by analogy, they cannot understand. So is it in the sphere of the non-material perceptions. Spiritual vision of that which is outwardly invisible is the basis of the entire religious faculty. To it the crudest and the most highly developed forms of religious experience alike belong. Like all other human perceptions the religious perceptions need to be trained, to be interpreted, to be co-ordinated. That when untrained or unco-ordinated they may mislead, and may mislead the more the more intense they are, must be frankly admitted : for the same is true of all other human faculties. But again this is no reason for denying their reality, and certainly should not lead us to minimise their importance.

There is some advantage in digressing for a moment upon the faculty of discernment in general as a human possession : for there is a faculty of discernment that is not to be accounted for by the processes of logical reasoning or of formal thought, a faculty which enters into the intuitive processes which are observed to be practised by the artist and the poet, and even by the scientific discoverer. There are, for example, artists who have never studied the laws of geometry or perspective, who have never studied anatomy, and who yet in their

pictures obey the laws of those sciences by a sort of instinct. If a shadow is drawn so as to fall in a wrong direction, or a limb is drawn in some incorrect position, they will at once know that it is wrong. If you ask them how or why it is wrong they cannot tell you ; they do not even themselves know the reason. All they can say is : "Why ! I *see* that it is wrong." They have lived so much, so intimately amongst these things that they cannot make a mistake without at once recognising it to be a mistake. The faculty of reasoning plays absolutely no part here ; they have acquired an intuition lacking in other men, and have become *seers*. It is so with the musician, who if he be a true musician having lived in his art, grows into an instinctive knowledge which others have to acquire by painful mastering of rules of harmony and counterpoint. The poet in like manner, if he be a true poet, attains as by instinct, that is to say by a species of inner discernment to flights of thought that philosophy could only have arrived at by long and painful effort. The faculty of vision or discernment which does not contradict reason, does not even employ reason, but which nevertheless arrives at rational results by another process, is one of the most singular of human possessions. It was possessed by Faraday in a remarkable degree. Familiarising himself with the experimental facts, living amongst them, as his biographers tell us, letting, in Matthew Arnold's luminous phrase, his thoughts play freely about them, he became able to foresee new facts and new relations, which subsequently were verified by experiment, some only with extreme difficulty, and others not in his own lifetime. Herein his work

resembled the intuitive process of the artist rather than the calculating and logical process of the philosopher. Newton, too, in spite of his own sententious dictum, *hypotheses non fingo*, was possessed of this indefinable faculty. It is on record that when he was asked how he came to deduce his laws of motion from the observation of the falling of bodies, he replied: "By constantly thinking about them." There is a very remarkable analogy, which is indeed something more than analogy, afforded by certain results in that part of mathematics known as the Integral Calculus. The mathematical process of integration is, as every beginner in mathematics knows, the converse of the process of differentiation, and many of the solutions of differential equations have been arrived at by performing the process of integrating them. But there were certain other differential equations with which the process of the integral calculus was found powerless to deal: they were insoluble, their integrals remained unknowable. Many of these have, however, become known in an altogether different way. Some mathematician of genius, with that quality of vision that is art and not science, had imagined what the integral ought to be, and, though his first suggestion may have had to be modified or adjusted before being finally established, proved that it was the integral, by finding, through the reverse process of differentiating that which he had imagined, that it yielded the differential equation of which the solution had been hitherto undiscoverable. This is a case where reasoning being powerless to step forward, a different faculty of the mind came in and found the solution from which, when once found, reasoning could step

backward to a *terra cognita*. All this by way of reminding the reader that there is a faculty of discernment which works not by any process of logical reasoning; but the results of which can be tested both by reason and experience.

But so is it also with the faculty of spiritual discernment. It is a power of inward vision which works by no process of formal thought, a spiritual intuition which, when reason has come to the end of its data, and fails of the power to step forward, can take the step into that which would otherwise be unknowable. Was it altogether by misnomer that in classic speech there was assigned to this intuitive faculty the verb to "divine"? The faculty of seeing the invisible, of discovery of that which would otherwise be unknowable, is it not to be accounted God-given? And what is revelation, save the disclosure or discovery of the otherwise unknowable to the inner consciousness of him to whom this faculty has been given?

This is no mere verbal analogy this likening of the faculty of religious perception to that of physical vision. The "eye" of faith is at once a simile and a profound truth. For the faculty that lies behind the physical organ is an intellectual one; and the physical eye or physical ear would be absolutely useless if there were not behind it the perceptive brain, and the intelligence to comprehend the perception. For physical vision the brain needs not only to exist but to be trained. Our perception itself needs to be educated. In Berkeley's "Essay on Vision" there is a well-known passage in which he suggests that if an intelligent blind adult person were suddenly to receive his sight, he would not all

at once be able to understand or even recognise what he saw. The writer well remembers, when he was a boy, the case of a younger playfellow who had grown up blind, but who, as the result of an operation at the age of ten or twelve years, had his sight restored; and how for several days after he was allowed to see, though he could readily see the cat or the dog moving about, he could not tell by looking at them which was which, but required to feel their fur in order to distinguish between them. And as the brain is related to the physical organs, the eye and ear, being itself needful to them if they are to be rightly used, and yet needing them to keep contact as it were with the outward world, so in a sense is the soul related to the intellect. For the intellectual perceptions of mankind, if they are to be rightly used for the benefit of the race, and not to end with the individual, need to be interpreted by the spiritual organ, to be valued in terms of the higher emotions, to be weighed as contributing to the motives which, for good or evil, sway the character. The soul, too, has need of the intellectual organs, even as the eye and ear have, that by their aid, by memory, by association, by contrast, by inference, in short by the processes of thought, one spiritual perception may be correlated with another spiritual perception, and the spiritual faculty be educated even as sight and hearing may be. There are truly stages in the development of spiritual perception; the strongest vision may be neither the clearest nor the most intelligent. There are always the newly-enlightened who see men "as trees walking," and whose spiritual perceptions are usually, if not necessarily, crude, and are often the cruder the

more sincere they be. It is well, indeed, when men can say from the depths of a deep consciousness : "The Eternal is my light and my leading, whom shall I fear." *Dominus illuminatio mea* stands as the motto of the University that has been the training mother of thousands. Yet it is more excellent when every one conscious of having been touched by that divine illumination shall find himself in the mood that prays for more light. Recovery of sight to the blind—*Τυφλοῦς ἀνάβλεψεν*—was the benefaction which the prophet Isaiah had announced in the scroll read by Jesus Christ in the synagogue at Nazareth. Recovery of spiritual sight to the spiritually blind has indeed followed for thousands of human beings ; but that recovery is practically of small value if with it there come not also the power to comprehend that which is seen, the capacity to interpret the vision. The eye, said Goethe, sees nothing save what it itself brings the power to see. The statement is profoundly true, for the unperceptive gaze is a seeing that is unworthy of the name. A cow and a man may gaze at the same scene ; but with what wholly different perception of its significance. Anatomically and physiologically the eye of a monkey is practically identical with the eye of a man. Let man and monkey look at the same object, the page of a book, a historic pageant, or the sailing of a ship ; each will in the physical sense see precisely the same thing, but how utterly differently will each apprehend it. Let one who has spiritually ears to hear, and another who is of the non-religious class, read the same book of devotion, or attend the same religious service, and how entirely differently will it appeal to each.

Revelation needs no external witness to establish itself, since the faculty to which it appeals is a faculty of inward vision. Revelation is indeed often a revelation of the obvious, which has become obvious only to him who has become possessed of the insight to discern it. We see it—it has been revealed to us, for we could not see it before. Yet it was there all the time ; only our eyes were holden.

It was urged above that the discovery of truth by spiritual discernment, that is by revelation, is a process independent of the inductions or deductions of formal thought, by a faculty which is not reason. It moves as it were in a different plane ; and though the planes of spiritual vision and of the intellect are different yet they may intersect. In some natures the faculty of spiritual vision may be very dominant while their intellectual powers are feeble. More often the reverse is true. The late Mr. Herbert Spencer may be taken as a striking example of a man having a most highly developed intellect totally devoid of the faculty of spiritual vision. He was essentially and avowedly non-religious, yet came in the end of his life to admit that he had found something to be lacking in his nature. He had put away from him all religious creeds, yet came to regard them "with a sympathy based on community of need," while still unable to accept the solutions they offered. The "creeds" of orthodox religions repelled him as a reasonable being. Having no vision to see beyond them into the spiritual realities which they are supposed to declare, but which, alas ! they rather conceal, he had nothing to put in their place. True to himself, he made himself no

illusions ; and, while wishing that solutions to the problems of existence might be found, he saw none.

“Where no vision is, the people perish,” wrote the wise man of Jerusalem ; and all history proves the necessity of the idealist. The prophet, that is the man who speaks forward, and the poet, that is the man who makes forward, are not more necessary than the seer, the man who sees forward. The passion to know, which is characteristic of our time, with its impatience of all and every knowing that does not justify itself by the rules of the syllogism, presents one phase of human development, a phase marvellous in the command it has brought to mankind over the material forces of nature. But for the harmonious development of the whole man something more is needed than a mere extension of material knowledge, of the laws of matter, organic and inorganic, and of the forces which act on matter. There is needed an equal development of the emotional side of man’s nature, and in particular of that faculty of spiritual vision which modern science has left on one side as having no part in her progress. How this faculty of spiritual vision may be developed and trained, to what laws it is subject, will be left for separate enquiry. The prospect of an intellectual age where everything is to be explained by the principles of mechanics, chemistry, and thermodynamics, where human conduct is to be regulated by statistics, and justice administered in accordance solely with the ethics of philosophic reason, is not an inviting one. For there rises within us something that imperiously asks for motives to influence and direct conduct, for sanctions of a holier and a higher kind than

mere codes of rules, for impulses of mercy and pity toward the weak and the ignorant, for gleams of inspiration and illumination, for vision into the unseen. As Christ Himself foretold to His followers, the moment comes when we desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man. What shall it profit if that power of vision shall have perished of atrophy?

CHAPTER VI

Christ the Beginning

CHRISTIANITY starts from the person of Jesus of Nazareth, "the Christ," as those called Him who were looking for the redemption of Israel, and who discerned in Him the promised deliverer of their nation. But both in Eastern and Western Europe, and at the hands of those who were not of the race of Israel, the Christianity which began with Jesus of Nazareth has developed far beyond its origin, has become a cult, a literature, a tradition, and an organisation, quite other than that of its Founder. Let us leave the developments, for the moment, and consider the origin: the incarnation of Divinity in man. "Let us make man in Our image" was the intent attributed in Genesis to the *Ēlohim*, when the creation of man was in consideration. It is an unconscious tribute to the conviction that man, as man, shares something of the Divine nature, if only to exist in its image. The same figure recurs in the later biblical writers with respect to Jesus of Nazareth: "Christ who is the image of God" (*ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ*), as St. Paul says in 2 Cor. iv. 4, and in Col. i. 15; "the express image of [His] person" (*χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως*), as the

author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i. 3, writes. And again, in 2 Cor. iv. 6, "God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." With these writers there was no question or hesitation : God was in Christ, manifesting the nature and character of the Eternal Father through the person of man. Divinity manifested through humanity may seem a strange notion to those who have been brought up in the theological prejudice that everything human is essentially wicked : but that prejudice is far from the spirit of the gospels. The notion which strikes strangely on the biased ear is strange only because of that bias. "Show us the Father," said Philip to Jesus, "and it sufficeth us." "Have I been so long time with you," was the reply, "and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" The human person whom he had known so long was himself the revelation of the Divine. And this is the Divine order—first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. Yet all the theologians have gone the other way, and instead of explaining the Divine things through the human, have essayed to explain the human by the Divine—that of which we know little by that of which we know less ! What theologian dares to tell the simple fact that the first comprehension which a child attains of Divine love is by loving its mother ? Without antecedent pure human love, Divine love were unknowable. What priest dares to acknowledge that while St. Paul uses the similitude of the love of the bridegroom for the bride, in the endeavour to bring home the intensity of the love of Christ for His Church, the compilers of the

Prayer-book have inverted the simile, and represent marital love as being the mere reflexion of the love of the mystical bridegroom for the mystical bride, thus putting the spiritual before the natural? Has any of the religious philosophers of the world ever offered to mankind a higher, a purer, a truer conception of divinity than was revealed to man "in the face of Jesus Christ"? This is the point precisely missed by those who in their mistaken efforts to exalt the name of Jesus, and to crown Him Lord of all, ignore His human nature, and rob Him of His humanity. Think of all the waste that has resulted from the doctrines of impeccability, virgin-birth, immaculate conception, and the like, which empty the humanity of Jesus of all reality, and make Him a superhuman phantom, whose "temptations" and "sufferings" are thus reduced to a meaningless show. If He had been impeccable—incapable of yielding to the temptations to satisfy the natural impulses of hunger, thirst, sex, acquisition, anger, domination—how can it be said, as was said of Him by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "He was tempted in all points like as we are"? Unless the temptations and sufferings of Jesus are to be refined down to a mere mockery, we must hold that He was very man of very man, a son of man indeed, coming in by the gate of non-miraculous human birth, and departing by the gate of corporeal human death; and *because* of this complete humanity, able to reveal to us, as never before, the nature of the Divine. Any humanity diluted or less complete, any trace of demigodism, lowers the significance of the title by which he described himself, namely the Son of man. The ecclesiastics would virtually

have us exchange this for Son of woman. But the original Aramaic word *Bar Nasch* bears the meaning of the "son" of man in its representative sense as the man of men, the typical man, the representative of man as man. A Jew carpenter, you will say ; a Syrian workman, of whose history from the age of twelve to that of thirty we know nothing ; of whose childhood there are innumerable pretty legends told ; literally descended, it is true, through His father Joseph¹ from the royal house of David, but a mere peasant, the associate of fishermen and vine-dressers ! Yes, and much more indeed, as who will but follow the recorded doings and sayings of the Son of man, may know. The image of God ; the stamp of His manifestation ; the fullness of the Divine revealed corporeally. Whether the early tradition be valid or not that it was at the baptism that the divine Sonship was conferred² upon Jesus, it is self-evident that to His own associates the humanity of Jesus appealed, long before they had any idea of attributing divinity to Him. When His essential divinity flashed upon them it was *because* it had been manifested to them through His humanity. Divine and human meeting in Him, the Divine in the human, our knowledge of what

¹ The insertion in St. Luke iii., 23-28, of the genealogy through David to Joseph is unintelligible unless intended to prove the royal descent of Jesus through Joseph. Verse 23 as it stands in the Authorized Version is ambiguous. In the Codex Bezae there stands *ὡς* instead of *ὡστί*, and the *ὅν* is omitted ; so that a nearer rendering of the verse would be : And Jesus when He came [to the baptism] was as supposed about thirty years of age, being the son of Joseph.

² Codex Bezae, in Luke iii., 22, gives as the voice from heaven : "Thou art My beloved Son ; *this day* I have begotten Thee" ; thus agreeing with Justin Martyr's teaching in the primitive Church, before the doctrines of the pre-existent Logos and of the virgin-birth had taken hold.

Divine nature is, and of what it implies, has grown through the human revelation of it. The Divine is seen to be not simply humanity made perfect, but something far beyond and excelling. In revealing the Divine, Jesus could not bring to finite minds the comprehension of all the vastness of the Eternal, the Immortal, the Invisible : but He could at least unveil aspects of them till then unknown. The Divine, narrowed down to the comprehension of the human by being manifested through the human, what is that but a revelation of the image of God? But again—in the imperfection of the definitions which the mind can frame—where does “humanity” end and “divinity” begin? Are they really mutually exclusive terms? Or do they not, rather, overlap in their intensive quality? Did not the disciples of Jesus recognise His divinity because they found His humanity of so Divine a stamp?

Perhaps to some a scientific analogy may be helpful. Mathematicians have speculated much upon the possibility of a fourth dimension of space, and upon the nature of a universe possessed of four dimensions. A point is of no dimensions; a line of one dimension; a plane of two dimensions; a solid of three. The shadow of a line, in its own direction, is a point; the shadow of a plane, in its own direction, is a line; the shadow of a solid is a plane figure. In other words, the projection of a one-dimensional figure is a thing of no dimensions; while the projection of a two-dimensional figure is a figure of one dimension. Similarly, the projection of a three-dimensional figure is a figure of two dimensions. Logically, then, the projection of a

four-dimensional figure, if it could exist, should be a figure of three dimensions, that is a solid. But we know of no four-dimensional figures of which the existing solids should be the projections or shadows. The geometry of the real stops short, in our experience, at three dimensions. Yet that is no reason for denying the possibility of a true geometry of a higher kind which thus would include the known geometrics of three, two, and one dimensions. A plane figure in two dimensions, a mere shadow or projection, can suggest to us the form belonging to the three-dimensional solid figure. It has even been possible for acute minds to form some dim conception of the figures of four dimensions, by considering how the solids of three dimensions can be regarded as their projections in three-dimensional space. Is it not possible, then, to suggest here an analogy with higher things? Can one conceive of the Divine fullness "projected" upon the plane of the human: like a plane figure suggesting, in the limitations of two dimensions, a form belonging to three? But it were idle to labour a speculation comprehensible only to few.

Certain it is that most of the praiseworthy attempts to render intelligible the metaphysical ideas prevailing at different epochs as to the nature of Christ have availed only to bewilder the thinker. And in the bewilderment of thought the devout soul has often frankly abandoned all effort at consistent thinking, and has substituted feeling for thought. This abnegation of the use of the faculty of thinking may be very beautiful, but it is very unsatisfying. Men gifted with the power to think, as well as to feel, refuse, and rightly refuse, to throw

away a God-given faculty. The theological problem as to the union of the two natures—the human and the Divine—in the person of Jesus Christ needs above all clarity of thought ; and clarity of thought is not assisted by confusion between thought and feeling. Of primary importance, too, is the avoidance of confusion in language, for clear thought cannot be expressed in cloudy words. Before one can even begin to discuss the problem of the two natures one must adopt definitions of the terms used. It is largely for want of intelligible definitions that so much theological strife has prevailed. The theologians have been in sore straits. One evidence of this is the fashionable *kenosis* doctrine, which attempts to account for the ignorance and other human limitations of Christ by saying that although undoubtedly Divine, and therefore Omniscient and Omnipresent, He voluntarily “emptied Himself” of His glory and became human, and therefore ignorant and incapable of being in more than one place at once. But this is a mere saving of the theological face by reducing definitions to an absurdity. For if by definition Divinity is Omniscient and Omnipresent, then a being so limited (whether voluntarily or not) as to be not omniscient, and not omnipresent, is no longer Divinity. The whole of the great monophysite controversy of the fourth century was essentially a war of words. Yet its echoes reverberate to this day ; and the Church still pronounces anathema—in theory at least—on every one who shall say that Christ is God-man and not God-and-man ! But how far is all this word-battling from the spirit of Jesus ? Jewish prepossessions, mediæval traditions, metaphysical scholiasms, have all in turn

warped the growth of Christian doctrine and subverted the teaching of the Master. The Christianity of the first age was one thing : that of the Churches of the present day a very different affair. Christ the beginning has been in the end so overborne by the accretions of centuries that his lineaments are with difficulty discerned in the Christ as officially presented to the world. The Way, the Truth, the Light no longer suffices. The Way is confused by other ways ; the Truth is vexed with errors masquerading as truths ; the Light is mingled with lights of other lighting. Jesus Christ is not the same to-day as yesterday ; or, at least, He is not presented as the same. But yesterday, in the world's history, the Christ before whom men prostrated themselves was Christ the Avenger : the triumphant and vengeful prince of heaven, coming in the clouds amid the host of angels and archangels with flaming swords to execute everlasting punishment on the unrighteous, as we may see by the wrathful presentations of Him in the Sistine Chapel, and in the frescoes of the Last Judgment in the Campo Santo of Pisa and many another Italian city. That terrible figure is not really Jesus of Nazareth, is not the Good Shepherd, is not the Great Physician, is not the Prince of Peace. To-day He is invoked as patron by warriors panting for the blood of their enemies, and by bishops assisting at the launching of deadly Dreadnoughts ; He is worshipped by smug swindlers who make millions out of financial trusts and rings ; He is patronised by politicians and fashionable adventurers ; but the Christ who is thus invoked and worshipped and patronised is not the Christ of the beginning, but only the Christ as the

distortions of the passing ages have left Him—a vice-gerent, coldly sublime, intolerably just, whose authority on earth has been delegated to the Pope ; whose compassions are to be sought through His mother ; whose society is closed save to those who can pronounce exactly the shibboleth of the orthodox creeds ; whose cultus has blossomed into a solemn pantomime with priests and acolytes to do the posturing.

Let us consider a little what Christ, “in the beginning,” has really meant in religious thought and in practical religion. What, apart from all downward developments, has Jesus of Nazareth stood for ? Let the answer be given in the words of an English scholar whose greatness is not yet duly valued :—

“On its theological side, the value of Christ’s life consists in the belief that here, once, in the course of history, God spake to man face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend—that in the character of Jesus, as it is disclosed to us by word and act, we see and read the character of God” (Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, p. 97).

Here, at least, there is no metaphysical cobweb, no menace of the doctrines which perplex or the dogmas which divide. But will the theologians allow this simple statement to pass unchallenged ? Alas, no ! There stands in the way the stern figure of orthodoxy to chide its simplicity. “In the Catholic theology a difference, not of degree but of essence, [is held] to divide the human personality from the Divine” (Dr. W. S. Lilly, *The Great Enigma*, p. 265). How essentially false a division :

for if it were so, then Christ, having the two natures, had two personalities, was, in fact, in Himself two persons essentially different! How essentially false a position, for if it were thus, how could anything Divine appeal to the mere human? That it does so appeal is a proof that the two are not different in essence. It is chiefly want of proper definitions that has led catholic theology into this inconsequential dogma of the two natures, and the Protestant Churches that call themselves free have been too much enslaved in the legacy of Calvin's Institutes to go back to the simplicity of apostolic thought. No such dogmatic stumbling-block vexed the first age of the primitive Church. The creeds, as the Churches have them to-day, had not been invented. For some thirty years from its foundation, membership in the Church, and even admission to her ministry, involved no more formal statement of faith than the simple confession: "I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God." Is this *credo* bare and unelaborate? Does it omit all the clauses that divide, all the assertions that perplex, all the damnations that revolt? Is it incomplete beside the Symbol of Nicæa or the *Quicumque Vult*? Let it be so. But when it was uttered in a moment of exaltation, in the first flush of the new dawn at Cæsarea Philippi by Simon Peter, the Master did not reject it as unsatisfactory. His instant reply was: "Blessed art thou, Simon Peter . . . and on this rock will I build My Church." The very foundation of the Christian Church then is the intuition—not laid down by dogma, but borne in upon the soul as the result of comradeship with Jesus, as the inevitable conclusion from the witness

of His human life—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Does the question ever arise: What think ye of the Christ, whose son is He? The only answer, through all the ages, of those who have really comprehended the humanity of Jesus must be the same. But the self-same answer, if repeated parrot-wise as a mere *credo*, without personal conviction of soul, without the antecedent comprehension of the human Jesus, without the internal, unforced, irresistible conviction formed during moments of comradeship, of spiritual communion, what was it ever worth? No affirmation of dogma, no dialectic proposition, ever was, ever could be, a firm foundation. Nothing but the Divine intuition borne in upon the living soul could be as a rock, a rock against which the portals of Hades should be powerless to prevail. Portals of Hades? Yes, the gates of death which should close upon every soul of man, until and unless some deliverance were wrought on his behalf.

And here we begin to discern, across the mist of the ages, a glimpse of another rock, not the rock on which the Church was founded, but the rock against which the ship of Christian faith struck in her early courses, the rock of Jewish legalism. Deliverance of the soul from Hades, that underworld of night into which all souls went down at death; that was a problem present to the mind not only of the Jew, and of the Oriental everywhere, but also of the Greek. Who, or what power, could deliver man from the kingdom of darkness, or translate him into the living household and family of God? What new revelation could Jesus the Christ open to His disciples as they walked with Him? What

new hope could He give them to console them in view of approaching dissolution? Christ had become the beginning, how could He become the end of their faith? They found Him bringing new life and hope into the hearts of men; they saw how His touch, His very presence, could heal the sick and cast out demons; they heard Him pronounce with authority, as the Son of man, the forgiveness of sins. But still at the close of life for all of them there stood the dread gates of Hades, and the inevitable end: death! To them His words of victorious defiance to the portals of Hades must have seemed indeed an enigma.

Yet hints of the solution of that enigma came quickly. In the narrative of St. Matthew, as it follows on the episode of Cæsarea Philippi, we find that Jesus began at once to intimate to them His perception of His own coming doom of suffering and death, as also of His own rising again. Did any man desire to come after Him, then he must deny himself and take up the cross¹ and follow Him, for—and here came as it were the revelation of a secret—for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. And then the Son of man would come in His kingship, in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and would reward every man according to his works. And again He foretold His own sufferings and death, and asked His disciples whether they were able to drink of the cup of which He Himself would be called to drink. Whoever among them would be chief must become

¹ What the disciples at that day would understand by "taking up the cross" was never explained. See p. 106.

their servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to devote His life for the deliverance of the many. The word *λύτρος*,¹ *deliverance*, is translated "ransom" in the Authorized Version. How, then, was Jesus to give His life for the deliverance of the many from the portals of Hades? However these things be, there can be no doubt that the real answer, accepted by the primitive Church, is that by His resurrection (then dimly foretold, though entirely unrealised by the disciples) He was to burst the portals of Hades, thus abolishing death, and bringing life and immortality to light. Throughout the years of His ministry He was preparing men for this deliverance by restoring their souls, leading them into the paths of righteousness, saving them from their sins, transforming their being, teaching them to save their lives by losing them, showing them in the end how to put away sinning by self-sacrifice. God, as the apostle said, was "in" Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Having loved the world He loved it to the end. This was His gospel of life; this His own example—the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for that of His sheep: and the gates of Hades should no longer prevail.

How Jewish legalism distorted the gospel of Christ into a bargain between God and the devil, to let the souls of men go free at the price of the blood of Jesus need not here be retold. Nor is it

¹ *Λύτρος* occurs only in Matt. xx. 28 and Mark x. 45. Its true significance is seen by reference to Acts vii. 35, where Moses is described as *λυτρωτής*, a *deliverer*. He delivered, but certainly did not ransom, the Israelites.

necessary to recount how subsequently the Church modified this horrible doctrine of atonement into its modern form, wherein the blood of Jesus is offered to appease the wounded pride or anger of an offended Jehovah ; or, toned down as in Article II. of the English Church, to reconcile God to man. Both doctrines are equally false ; equally unworthy in the conceptions they imply of the nature of God ; equally incompatible with the narratives of the gospels, and in contradiction to the teachings of the apostles as recorded in the Acts.

No ; faith must find its ultimate return from the manufactured creeds of men to Christ the beginning. The Anselmian doctrine of atonement and the Calvinistic plan of salvation must both go down before the confession of Cæsarea Philippi. The simple, heart-born, spontaneous human conviction which found its expression in the words "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the ever-living God," remains a perpetual witness to the initiation of the soul. Christ, the beginning, the incarnation of divinity in man, is the soul's supreme possession. And translation from the darkness of death into the kingdom of God, through the deliverance wrought by Christ, persists as the soul's immeasurable hope and final destiny.

In the fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel is found the narrative of the temptations of Jesus. If the language is figurative the meaning is not hard to discern. He had just passed through the

experience of baptism, with its accompanying state of exaltation, in which the voice of God was heard announcing the divine Sonship conferred upon Him, and He had withdrawn under the constraint of the Spirit into the solitude of the desert. In that hour of stress, when the venture of faith asserted its imperative claims, there came upon Him three separate temptations which would indeed have been a mockery had He been so constituted as to be unable to fall into them, had He not resisted the tempter. First, a temptation to use Divine powers to satisfy the natural appetites of the human self; secondly, a temptation to spiritual vanity and miracle-mongering; lastly, a temptation to grasp at dominion and influence. All three temptations were met with calm assurance, fortified—and here is a human touch of strange significance—by reference to the sacred books of His forefathers. Temptations of such sorts are apt, in the hour of spiritual crisis, to beset every one who has felt the call of the spirit; and Jesus was not so far above other men as to be exempt. No temptations beset Him but such as are common to man; but He fought them and conquered. He returned from the desert strengthened in the consciousness of heavenly influences surrounding Him, and forthwith embarked upon His ministry in Galilee. The ministry thus begun ended only in the garden of Gethsemane, when He could lift His eyes to the only true God, His Father, and say: "*I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.*"

CHAPTER VII

Ævangelium Christi

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

“**T**HE beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” are the words which open the narrative of Mark, commonly accepted as the earliest of the synoptic writers. Written at Rome in the seventh decade of our era, and intended primarily for Gentiles, it is apparently the first reduction to writing of events which for some forty years had been handed down by tradition ; events unhappily not recorded until tradition had begun to interweave the inevitable embroidery of pious amplification which obscures in proportion as it adorns.

“The beginning of the Gospel” : how does it begin ? Not with any magical narration of heavenly apparitions or præternatural manifestations, but with the announcement of the forerunner.

“As it is written in the prophets, ‘Lo, I send my messenger before thee who will prepare thy way. The voice of one crying aloud in the desert, prepare the road for the Lord, make straight his highway,’ so John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of the penitent for forgiveness of sins.”

With the briefest mention of the baptism and the temptation in the wilderness the narrative proceeds :—

“Now after that John had been thrown into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying ‘The time is full come, and the Kingdom of God is at hand : repent, and believe the Gospel.’”

The word “Gospel” occurs only four other times in St. Mark. Once in the announcement of the great secret (Mark viii. 35) :—

“For whosoever shall choose to save his life shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his life for the sake of Me and of the Gospel, the same shall save it.”

And again (chap. x. 29) :

“There is no one who has left home, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for the sake of Me and of the Gospel, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the coming age the life of the ages.”

The next passage is the simple statement that before the end of the age comes (chap. xiii. 10)

“The Gospel must first be preached amongst all nations.”

After the anointing by the woman in the house of Simon, Jesus said :

“Wheresoever in the whole world this Gospel shall be preached, this which she has done shall also be told in remembrance of her.”

The references in the other Gospels are quite few—Matt. iv. 23 ; ix. 35 ; and xi. 5 ; xxiv. 14.

Luke iv. 18 ; vii. 22 ; ix. 6 ; and xx. 1—the most important of them being that in Luke iv. 18, the reading in the synagogue from the scroll of Isaiah :—

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel [or announce glad tidings] to the poor ; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The latest use of the term is in Luke xx. 1, where on one of the days of the feast the chief priests and scribes, with the elders, came upon Jesus as He taught the people in the temple and preached “the Gospel.”

What was this Gospel which Jesus Christ preached ? It is a momentous question : for if we have reasonable means of ascertaining what was the Gospel according to Jesus, we are absolved from giving much heed to other Gospels. For the term “The Gospel” has been so misused, so warped from its original sense, especially by Protestant divines during the last three centuries, that most Christians overlook its true meaning.

What was this Gospel, this good news which Jesus preached to the poor, which was to be proclaimed amongst all nations, and for the sake of which a man was to lose his home, his family and his possessions, yea and his own life also ?

We may conveniently group under nine heads the principal features of the teaching of Jesus. These headings are not exhaustive—they do not categorise His parables, or His sermons, or His

prayers, or His denunciations of Phariseism, or His eschatology.

1. The Kingdom of God.
2. The Fatherhood of God.
3. The Brotherhood of Man.
4. The Sublimity of the Human Soul.
5. The Forgiveness of Sins.
6. The Necessity of Re-birth.
7. The Secret of Self-sacrifice.
8. The Love of the Brethren.
9. The Life of the Ages.

Repent—The Kingdom of God is at hand. The time is fulfilled, repent ye and believe the good news. This was the message with which Jesus opened His mission. To men eager for redemption from the bondage of a foreign yoke, filled with century-long aspirations for national deliverance, such a message brought keen hopes. The call to live righteously because of the near approach of the new age would not seem strange to a nation accustomed to hear the prophetic voices of the past read in their synagogues every Sabbath, and imbued above the surrounding nations with a genius for righteousness. But what of the Kingdom thus announced as in advent? We trusted—they said sadly, after His death—that it had been He who should have delivered¹ Israel. But they understood not that the deliverance which Jesus strove to effect was a greater thing than the

¹ Ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ. The word λυτροῦσθαι cannot possibly mean *redeemed* in the sense of *ransomed*. *Delivered, set free* from the Roman yoke is the obvious meaning. See the footnote on λύτρος, on p. 85 above, which is mistranslated "*ransom*" in the Authorized Version, in Matt. xx. 28.

political liberation of the nation, but was the deliverance of the human soul. And the Kingdom, variously described as the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Heavens, and the Kingdom of righteousness, was no earthly dominion, but a spiritual household wherein God Himself should hold sway; a Kingdom not outwardly organised, but established in the hearts of its adherents; a theocracy not wearing the symbols of kingship, but ruling spiritually in the individual, inwardly, in the heart. This was something not easily reconciled with the prevalent national longing. Was it wonderful, then, that Jesus found Himself constrained to propound His meaning in parables, often needing explanation? There were grades in His teaching: He "preached" to the multitudes; He "taught" His disciples; He "talked much" with the chosen band who became His apostles. But if the manner of inculcating His gospel differed in different circles, the gospel was essentially the same: it cannot be divided into an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine.

First and foremost of the principles of the Kingdom was the Fatherhood of God. No strange doctrine, it is true, to Israelites, who were familiar with the old Davidical psalm, "Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him"; but as proclaimed by Jesus, falling with new and wonderful meaning upon their ears. For it presented God's love as a human love, deepened, strengthened, and poured out freely as a father's unrestrained love for his son or his daughter. The Hebrew had realised the majesty of the Most High, and had worshipped Him with awful fear: but he had never realized His tender

love, or the nearness of His presence, or the all-embracing fullness and freedom of His mercy. And now there was to be brought home to Hebrew—and not to Hebrew only—by that simple order of process which makes the natural precede the spiritual (and which *is* the process of revelation) the great manifestation of the character of God, the good and kind All-Father. The Father in heaven was set forth as doing for His children all and more than all that a devoted and loving earthly father would do ; not giving them stones when they cried for bread ; not refusing sunshine or rain because they were naughty ; taking care for their nutriment and clothing at least as much as for the birds of the air or the lilies of the field ; giving them what they need even before they ask. It was a conception to be slowly grasped : to be learned little by little as exemplified in a human life—His own life. And when, after months of daily converse with His disciples, during which they had seen again and again how Jesus spent Himself and was spent for the service of man, and had learned the glory of His self-renouncing love, they appealed to Him : “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” His reply was : “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” His whole life was indeed a simple revelation of the human love of God ; of the nearness of God to man ; of the possibility of unmediated approach, free and unconstrained as that of the child to the parent.

But, further, as a corollary of the Fatherhood of God, followed the Brotherhood of Man. All being children of the Most High, they must cherish a love for one another as being brothers and sisters in

the great family, putting away enmities, jealousies, and all unkindliness. A man must not overreach his fellow man any more than he would overreach his own brother. He must regard every woman with the same delicacy of honour as that with which he would regard his own sister. He must do to others as he would that they should do to him. And this law of brotherly love must, like the Divine Fatherly love, extend even to the ungenerous and reprobate, to the "enemy" and to the churl. No more the provincial chauvinism : "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ;" but "be ye kind to the unthankful and to the evil, for so shall ye be the children of the Most High."

But, being children of the Most High, men must rise to the nobility of their station ; their souls were to be treated as of Divine origin, and their bodies as temples of the soul. What should a man give in exchange for his soul ? If he lose that, what should it profit him to gain the whole world ?

A second consequence of the Fatherhood of God seemed even more startling, though a necessary consequence of His unconditioned love—the Forgiveness of Sins. It shocked and amazed the Pharisee, the formalist, the upholder of the ceremonial law, to hear the Son of man proclaim to the unshriven outcast, "thy sins are forgiven thee." Who could forgive sins but God only, they asked. But the real meaning of their question was this : Who is this who dares to declare that God forgives the sins of those who have not followed the ceremonies prescribed by the law of Moses ? Who is this that dares to ignore the professional exponents of the national religion, and announce to miserable

sinners God's free forgiveness? Yet that is what Jesus did. The *unconditional* forgiveness, not bought by burnt-offerings or sacrifices, not paid for by any ransom, not dependent on any one else paying a penalty, a free gift, without money and without price; that is what Jesus proclaimed, and announced His right as the Man of men to proclaim, as a part of the Fatherly character of God. Even to prodigals the earthly father's love goes out in an unconditional forgiveness; how much more does the love of our Father in heaven! Alas! how strangely has the party which calls itself "evangelical" misrepresented the teachings of Jesus here. Orthodoxy has practically contradicted the sublimest of the parables by which Jesus taught His hearers the meaning of the gospel of love. Love alone purifies the soul and sets it aflame with the new being. When in the impulse of love the wanderer turns to follow righteousness, the old burden of sin falls from his back unconditionally. "Her sins which are many are forgiven her—for she loved much."

But this turning about of the wanderer, this entrance on the new life in which the old self is left behind, and in which life is lived for others, marks a spiritual era in the soul. The teaching of Jesus on this point is most emphatic. It involves a change, the momentous nature of which is heightened by the description of it as a re-birth: "Ye must be born anew," or, as it might be fitly rendered, "Ye must be born from above" (*ἀνωθεν*). That which is born of the flesh is flesh: that which is born of the spirit is spirit. It is the birth of this new and spiritual life in the soul which marks the fact that the new life has begun. The new life began indeed

before, but it was hidden ere it came to the birth.

Of that new life the prevailing note was to be self-renunciation in the service of man. No longer must a man live for his own self, for the aggrandisement of his own personality, for the advancement of his personal ambitions. Renunciation for the sake of others must temper his will and direct his ways. He must follow his Master in serving others and in devoting his life for the deliverance of the many. To him had been whispered the great secret: he who holds his own life dear is destroying it, while he who makes his own life of no account in this world shall keep it to the life of the ages. He must walk the world even as his Master did, banishing misery by loving-kindness, conquering disease by hope and tender care, dispelling ignorance by spreading the light, driving out sin by forgiveness, curing sorrow by sharing it.

Furthermore, he must show forth in his own ways and doings the love which the Master Himself showed forth. The great discourse of heavenly love which fills the closing chapters of the fourth Gospel gives us some idea of the glow and glory of the new way. All the common acts and relations of life became sacred when life itself was raised into the higher plane by love and self-sacrifice. Every day became a holy day, every place a holy place. Old distinctions of sacred and secular were passed away, because all had become new and hallowed. This was to realise on earth the Kingdom of the highest, and the life so lived was a life in the Kingdom, not separated from, but a part of, the life of the ages. To that unending existence, dimly foreseen by the

later prophets, men might look forward with confidence. Even if as yet they had no pledge that the terrors of death should be vanquished, the gospel of life unto life which Jesus preached up and down Galilee became as a joyful harbinger of undying existence.

Such was in truth the gospel according to Jesus. And what have the theologians made of it? The real Gospel has in it not a word of their favourite dogmas, of the compact of the Trinity, of the so-called plan of salvation, of any vicarious sacrifice, of any Jewish blood redemption, of any sacrifice of the Mass, of any priestly absolution. The Gospel of Galilee knows nothing of the creed-monger or of the ecclesiastic; it does not deal in theories. It goes straight to the heart of man as man, and by appealing to that which is divinest in his nature, draws him into the Kingdom.

Let us pause for a little while on that which, in particular, Protestant theologians are in the habit of setting forth as "the Gospel," namely, the theory of the atonement by blood. The monstrous doctrine that the loving Father of all foreordained that all men should be eternally damned in a hell of torment, unless Jesus Christ should be sacrificed to pay a ransom for them with His blood, is still being set forth as "the Gospel." It was not the Gospel of Galilee. Never¹ did Jesus proclaim

¹ In another place (see p. 85) attention has been drawn to the true meaning of the text, so often wrongly cited, as justifying this notion, namely, Mark x. 45, or Matt. xx. 28, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." The true meaning of the Greek for the last twelve words is: "Even to devote His life (or soul) as a deliverance for the sake of many." The word *ἀντὶ*—meaning "for the sake of," or "against"—

salvation through His own death. He said He came that men might have life more abundantly. Did He ever offer to save any man's soul? He told them to lose their souls that they might find them. Did He offer them a rescue from punishment? He offered them rest for their souls. Why, then, did Jesus die? Not to convert God from a state of anger to a state of forgiveness; no, although that amazing doctrine is still the teaching of the Anglican Church (see Article II. of the Articles of Religion). The answer of the first Christians to the question why did Jesus die? is furnished to us in the earliest of the epistles of Paul, that to the Churches of Galatia (chap. i. 4): "That He might deliver us from this present evil world"—in other words, that He might deliver us from evil—from sin—from sinning—in *this life*. Jewish formalism might go far in pressing the old sacrificial notion; and we know that Judaising teachers did, in fact, at a very early date enter in like grievous wolves, not sparing the flock. But that Christian writers should uphold this reversion to the old tribal superstition of human sacrifices is truly amazing. Think of the astounding utterance of a Protestant divine,¹ who declares that "The sin of the human race gathered in one huge penalty and cloud of guilt upon the head of Jesus Christ." What a conception this implies of the character of the All-Father! A wrathful demon who hates His children, and will only be appeased by making the

certainly in some cases is rightly translated as "instead of," yet here the giving of the life is represented as the climax of ministration, not as a "sacrifice."

¹ Dr. Watson, "The Doctrines of Grace," p. 111.

innocent suffer for the guilty—that is the being presented to us in place of a God of love and justice. And what, we may well ask, of the prevalent notion that, instead of making men better, the death of Jesus merely supplies to God a reason why they should be considered good, or be excused the penalty of sin? Is that the Gospel of Galilee? It is a hideous perversion. Equally hideous is the appeal to selfishness which orthodoxy makes in its threats of excommunication against those who do not swallow its creeds. Surely if there is one thing more plain than another in the Gospel of Jesus, it is the necessity of unselfishness. “Prepare to die,” say the ecclesiastics; “believe or be damned.” And the *sauve-qui-peut* exhortation of the street-corner preacher is just as far from the gospel of Galilee. Even under the old dispensation of the law, Moses could rise into utter self-renunciation and pray: “Blot me—I pray Thee—out of Thy book” (Exod. xxxii. 32); and Paul, in the fervour of the new dispensation, could asseverate, “I could wish myself anathema from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. ix. 3). Yet over the doors of the Salvation Army barracks we find written the selfish words, “Save your souls”! Rather should be written, in the spirit of Jesus, “Lose your souls, for My sake and for the sake of My Gospel, that ye may find them.”

The words “save” and “salvation” have indeed been sorely misused; and a reference to the original Greek is inevitable if we would get back to the meaning of the writers of the Gospels. The verb σώζω, *I save*, and the noun, σωτηρία, *salvation*, occur variously: the former often, the latter only

twice, in the reported words of Jesus. In the two places where He spoke of salvation, He said simply that salvation is for the Jews (John iv. 22), and that salvation had come to the house of Zacchæus because he, too, was a son of Abraham (Luke xix. 9). This is not the doctrine of the Salvation Army. As for the verb *to save*, it is used in two senses, as meaning (1) to heal, and (2) to provide safety. In the sense of *heal* we find the word *save* (or its participle *saved*) in such passages as, "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke vii. 50), as also in Luke xviii. 42; John iii. 17; v. 34; xii. 47; and the very same Greek word is rendered *heal* or *make whole* in Matt. ix. 21, 22; Mark v. 23; v. 28; v. 34; Luke vii. 3; viii. 48; xvii. 19. In the sense of *find safety* we find the word *saved* as in John x. 9, "by me if any¹ [sheep] enter in he shall be saved"—from the thieves and robbers outside the door—"and shall go in and out and find pasture." And we find the word in this signification, or in the kindred meaning of "*keep safely*," in the following passages:—Matt. viii. 25; x. 22; xiii. 20; xxiv. 13; Mark x. 26; xiii. 13; Luke viii. 12; ix. 56; xiii. 23; xviii. 26; xix. 10; and John x. 9; xii. 27. Of these passages there are three in which the meaning of *saved* is often represented to be that of being saved from the damnation of hell—viz. Luke viii. 12—"then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved;" Mark x. 26—"Who then can be saved?" and Luke xiii. 23, "Lord, are there few

¹ There is no word "man" in the Greek text—and Christ is represented as speaking of sheep going in through the door of the sheepfold.

that be saved ? ” Let us examine these passages. That in Luke viii. relates to the parable of the sower, and to the fate of those represented by the seed that fell on the wayside. To see what the Master meant by being saved, let us look at the fate of those represented by the seed which fell amongst thorns—they who go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of life, and who therefore bring no fruit to perfection. Being saved obviously means in this context, bringing fruit to perfection in this life ; and has nothing to do with hell or damnation. As to the two questions, “ Who, then, can be saved ? ” and, “ Are there few that be saved ? ” it is significant that to both the Master returned an oblique answer. He had been speaking of the difficulty for them that trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Not the difficulty of entering it after death, but of entering it now, in this life. If the rich man found it as hard as for a camel to crouch through a tent door, who then could enter ? “ With God all things are possible,” was the reply. “ Are there few that be saved ? ” The answer came almost as a paraphrase on the former one : “ Strive to enter in at the narrow door ”—enter before the Master of the house hath shut to the door and ye find yourselves shut out, vainly knocking for admission. That is the teaching of Jesus about salvation. He was the Good Shepherd who came to seek and to keep safely the sheep which had wandered. He was the Saviour who should save His people from their sins—not from the consequences of their sins, but from sinning—by putting into them the new life of righteousness that they might bring forth the fruit of the kingdom.

How does God save men? Let Paul answer: "In His mercy He saved us, by the purification of the re-birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit which He sent out (ἐξέχεεν) on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus iii. 5, 6). Or again: "Who hath given to us the service of reconciliation, namely this: that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 18, 19). That is precisely what Jesus was doing in His lifetime—proclaiming the unconditional forgiveness of sins, and reconciling the world to God, who was in Him. This is the central truth of the message of Jesus—that He came to reveal to men in His own person the amazing love of God, as of the Father of all. This is the truth for which He was accused of blasphemy, and for which He was put to death—a martyrdom (as Paul describes it), in his own times (*τὸ μαρτύριον καιροῖς ἰδίους*, 1 Tim. ii. 6). And what was the end and aim of it all? Let Paul again answer, in the language of his epistles to the Romans, where he is telling the early Church that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life: for the end and aim of the Gospel is that men might impute themselves to be—*νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ζῶντας δὲ τῷ Θεῷ, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν* (Rom. vi. 11)—dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Gospel according to Jesus, then, which He Himself preached, and which, according to their lights, His apostles preached after Him, was a gospel of joy, of forgiveness, of new life, of brotherly love, of self-renunciation, of service for man. It brought

the prodigal to his Father and left him there, face to face with divine love, needing no mediator to intervene, and no sacrifice to be offered save that of the contrite heart. It revealed the human heart of God in the Divine person of His Son, and glorified human life for ever by showing how divine it may become.

But Catholicism has swept the Gospel of Jesus from the scene, has wrapped it up in rites and ceremonies, has forged it into creeds, and has framed a vast engine of political and social power to impose in its stead the doctrines of the Councils, breathing anathema on all who fall not into obedience to her rule.

And Protestantism from its thousand chapels every Sunday sets forth another Gospel, a "plan of salvation," an invention of the theologians, a web of celestial tactics to outwit the devil and to rescue the soul from eternal torments in hell, by the aid of a bloody sacrifice. How utterly foreign to the Gospel of Galilee !

Woe unto you, theologians and bigots, who shut up the Kingdom of Heaven, and make the living words of Christ of none effect, perverting the good news, and leading the minds of men captive in the mazes of your tradition !

CHAPTER VIII

The Imitation of Christ

Was he not branded with all calumny,
Because he dared to teach the naked truth ?
Christ's words were not a book for Sabbath days :
But law of life, and judgment of the land ;
Not to be chosen, and pieced, and dogmatised,
But lived up to, the whole and not a part,
Alive, not dead, one spirit in new forms :—
And lived as Christ lived, poor, despised, alone,
Apart with God, and working miracles,
Not on the waves and winds, but on the wills
Of men, upon the hearts of multitudes,
The hidden germs of fresh humanities
Of live confederations yet unborn.

IT cannot be denied that, ever since the dawn of the Christian age, religion—that is religion pure, spiritual, and undefiled—has consisted, consciously or unconsciously, in the imitation of Christ. The reason is not far to seek. Then, as in no previous age, was the character of God revealed in a human person ; and the ideal of life thus manifested has remained the great ideal for the life of men.

But so soon as we begin to ask about the imitation of Christ as a type of practical religion, on what lines it is to proceed, we are brought up sharply against the various presentations of Christ offered to us in the Scriptures. For, in truth, it is impossible to blend these presentations into a harmonious

unity. Christology has never accomplished the task of unification of its multiform conceptions, otherwise the controversial theologians would have been dispossessed of their favourite battle-grounds. But the question must be faced, what is that which is set before us to imitate? And for the purpose of finding some answer it will suffice here to distinguish four of the leading presentations.

(I) The lowly Teacher of Galilee, the Good Shepherd, the Great Physician, the Healer of Souls, as presented in the narratives of the Synoptists.

(II) The Logos of the Alexandrian school and the fourth gospel, uncreate from the beginning, co-operant in creation, scarcely to be distinguished from the impersonated "Wisdom" of the later Hebrew literature.

(III) The Man from Heaven, who, because of His self-emptying of glory and obedience to death, had after His resurrection been highly exalted and given a Name above every name, as preached by Saint Paul.

(IV) The Judge and Mighty Conqueror of the Apocalypse and of the Book of Enoch, coming in awful splendours to execute vengeance on His enemies, and to reign.

Which of these is it we are to imitate?

The bare statement of the problem furnishes us with the answer.

Imitation of the transcendental Logos, of the Highly Exalted Man from Heaven, or of the Apocalyptic Conqueror is unthinkable. It is the Jesus of Nazareth, who walked with men in Galilee, who alone can be set forth for imitation by mortal men. It is because the Christ is imitable that the

imitation of Christ is an obligation on those who profess His name.

Let us, then, endeavour to trace the outlines of the teaching of Christ and His apostles in this matter of the imitation. Admittedly all will not be clear. For, while there is much in the teaching which rightly stands to-day as directions for those who would follow Christ, there arises again and again the difficulty that much of His teaching is couched in terms directed to the circumstances of His own environment, to the simple life of the Galilean peasantry amongst whom He moved : and amid our complex civilisation and the compelling limitations of our civic life we are not always sure how far His words apply, or are to be applied. Of one thing we may be certain : it is in the spirit of His injunctions and not in their letter that their application is to be held valid. When He said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find repose of soul," the words are true for all time and for every age. But when He said, "Whosoever wills to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" we may reasonably be in some doubt : for the condition "let him deny himself" ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν (Matt. xvi. 24 ; Mark viii. 34 ; and Luke ix. 23) needs explanation : and no one has ever ascertained the meaning which the words "take up His cross," ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ, would bear in the ears of those to whom it was spoken,¹ when as yet the cross of Christ had no significance, and when the phrase may have meant no more than :

¹ In the version of St. Luke, chap. ix. 23, the injunction is to take up the cross καθ' ἡμέραν—"day by day." This very phrase excludes all suggestion of a daily *crucifixion*.

“Let him pick up his crutch, or his staff.” “I have given you an example,” said Jesus, after performing the service, in the spirit of Oriental hospitality, of washing His disciple’s feet, “that ye should do as I have done to you” (John xiii. 15). But can any one doubt that the act was symbolic, or that any literal “imitation” of the performance would be a mere caricature? “If any man serve Me let him follow Me” (John xii. 26) may be vague; but at least it is not bound to any custom of Oriental hospitality, which would be ridiculous in the latitude of London. The man who would gird himself with a loincloth in lieu of the garments of civilisation, avowing that thereby he was following Christ, would rightly be put under restraint as a fanatic. But there are survivals, of Oriental origin, even in the celebration of the Eucharist in some Anglican churches, that are equally the mark of fanatical obsession, and are in reality no whit less absurd. It is not an ignoble imitation of childish literalness, such as this, but the noble imitation of intent and spiritual devotion that brings man nearer to God.

St. Peter summed up the main features of the human life in Galilee of Jesus, when (in Acts x. 38), in a sentence, he characterised Him as one “who went about doing good, and¹ healing all who were oppressed of the devil.” The words seem to be an echo of the instructions given by Jesus to His own disciples: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye received, freely give” (Matt. x. 8). It needs not much acquaintance, on the one hand, with Oriental fullness of speech; or on the other, with the pathology of nervous diseases, to read the true significance of

these words handed down by tradition. The miracles of healing that played so large a part in bringing to Him immediate local fame, were but one section of the numberless kindly deeds of simple human beneficence which marked the wanderings of Jesus. The narratives of the Synoptists are filled with accounts of these wayside acts of mercy and loving kindness. To give a cup of cold water to assuage a human need has become the typical Christian act.

But Jesus certainly put a deeper obligation upon His followers than the practice of pure beneficence. In personal elevation of character He required a standard far exceeding the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees—the highest standard conceivable: “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. v. 48). More like an identification than an imitation seems indeed the responsibility laid upon His followers. Thrice did He declare (John viii. 12 ; ix. 5 ; xii. 46), “I am the light of the world”: but He also said to His disciples (Matt. v. 14), “Ye are the light of the world,” conspicuous, therefore, like the hill cities which cannot be hidden. “Follow Me” was His literal command: and he who should follow must be prepared to go with Him to prison or to death; to fathom with Him the depths of immeasurable sorrow; to drink the cup of bitterness which it was laid on Him to drink; to become partaker of His sufferings.

If we turn for light to the teachings of the chief apostles on the meaning of imitation, we shall find them sufficiently explicit. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 20-33), speaking of the duty of Christians to endure patiently wrongful suffering for conscience’ sake says: “Even

to this were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth : who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." This is the essentially Christian doctrine of non-resistance, which is folly to the worldly man and to the advocates of a policy of force. Again (in chap. iv. 1), St. Peter sets forth that as Christ suffered for us in His flesh, so we also, in order that we may abandon sin, should arm ourselves with the same intention. Non-resistance of evil actions in others toward ourselves ; absolute trust in the overruling judgment of God ; willingness to submit to purification by suffering ; these things at least are clear as being a part of the imitation of Christ according to St. Peter.

St. Paul's epistles teem with references to the imitation of Christ, to the example which He set for His disciples to follow. He exhorts the Ephesians (Eph. v. 2) to "walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as an offering"—or, in Hebrew phrase, "a savoury smelling sacrifice"—"to God." The Colossians he exhorts to mutual forgiveness : "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. iii. 13). He beseeches the Corinthians (2 Cor. x. i.) "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," that he may not have to use boldness in reproving them. When he would invite them to make contributions for the sustenance of the poor, he urges in example the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ "who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes become poor" (2 Cor. viii. 9).

To the Romans (chap. xv. 2-5) he writes urging that they should bear one another's infirmities and not please themselves, "for even Christ pleased not Himself"; and they are to receive one another "as Christ also received us." The Corinthians he reminds that he himself seeks to please all in all, not seeking his own profit but the profit of the many; and adds: "Be ye imitators"—μιμηταί—"of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). And to the Galatians he wrote that noble injunction: "Bear ye one another's burdens, *and so fulfil the law of Christ*" (Gal. vi. 2). But the imitation of Christ which St. Paul coveted goes further and deeper. Writing to the Philippians, he prayed "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10). Such a renunciation was indeed in the spirit of the antecedent exhortation (Phil. ii. 5-8), "For let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought equality with God not a thing to be grasped after, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He bent Himself low, becoming obedient unto death—death of the cross." Again and again does this idea of imitation flash across the thoughts and words of the Apostle. "Planted together in likeness of His death" (Rom. vi. 5); the body of our humiliation is to be changed "that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21); "As we have borne the image of the earthly, so also we are to bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49); such are

some of the phrases which he pours out. We who are the body of Christ are to be built up (Eph. iv. 13) until we all come "unto a completed man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." In holiness of life we are to "put on" Christ (Rom. xiii. 14, and Gal. iii. 27). Like as Christ was raised up from the dead, "even so" (Rom. vi. 4) "we also should walk in newness of Life." We are to be always bearing about in the body the dying¹ of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10). St. Paul avowedly considered himself an imitator of Christ, and invited his hearers to become fellow-imitators, *συνμιμηταί* with him (Phil. iii. 17).

Of all books of Christian devotion, that which by common consent, no less than by the abundance of its editions, has won the first place, is the book of the Imitation of Christ, commonly attributed to Thomas à Kempis. Whoever its author was, it may be affirmed of him that in an age given over to ecclesiastical forms and scholastic dogmatism he had risen above them to a marvellous degree, by the intense fervour with which he had sought to assimilate the very mind and heart of Christ. Turning his pages² we seem almost to hear the Master Himself

¹ The word is the unusual word *νέκρωσις*, not the usual word *θανάτος*, *death*.

² The fourth book of the *De Imitatione* cannot be put in the same place with the first three. It is wanting in many of the MSS. Moreover, its sacerdotal assumptions and general inferiority, inevitably suggest that it was the product of another hand.

calling to us across the mist of centuries. Listen to the golden words of a few passages.

“If thou seek this or that, and would’st be here or there, the better to enjoy thy own profit and pleasure, thou shalt never be at peace, nor be free from trouble of mind. And this thou must understand not of revenues and wealth, but of seeking after honour also, and of the desire of vain praise, which all must pass away with this world.” (*De Imitatione*, Lib. iii. cap. xxvii.)

“He who would understand in their full savour the words of Christ must study to make his whole life conformable to him.” (Lib. i. cap. i.)

“Many follow Jesus as far as the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of his passion.” (Lib. ii. cap. xi.)

“Walk where thou wilt, seek where thou wilt, thou wilt find no higher way above, no safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.” (Lib. ii. cap. xi.)

“Make this thine aim, my son, rather to do the will of another than thine own. Ever choose rather to have less than more. Always seek the lower place and to be under the authority of all. Always wish and pray that the will of God may be wholly done in thee. Behold such a man as this enters into the region of peace and rest.” (Lib. iii. cap. xxiii.)

“I, saith Jesus, will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Lib. ii. cap. xii.)

“As the Father hath loved Me, (saith Jesus), I also love you, as I said to My beloved disciples, whom certainly I did not send to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honours, but to contempt; not to ease, but to toils; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember these words, my son.” (Lib. iii. cap. xxxi.)

“Follow Me; I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without the way there is no going, without the truth there is no knowing, without life there is no living. I am the directest way, the sovran truth, the uncreated life. If thou abide in My way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth

shalt make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on life everlasting." (Lib. iii. cap. lvi.)

"Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall have much peace." (Lib. i. cap. xi.)

Many indeed are they who have found spiritual joy and solace in the three books of the *De Imitatione*. Of the warmth and saintly fervour of the thoughts that run through it there can be no question; its tender and intimate dealings with the visitation of the soul are for all time and for every age. Nevertheless there is a serious limitation to its usefulness. It emphasises the passive or contemplative side to a degree that if not frankly confessed and counterpoised will tend to poverty of soul. It exalts the duty of renunciation so predominantly as to suggest that renunciation is an end in itself. This, its gravest defect, is doubtless a reflection of the tone of the age of its production, when in the arbitrary division between clergy and laity the active duties of Christian life were so surrogated to the ecclesiastic as to be virtually abstracted from the citizen. The remedy is to bear ever in mind these things—that asceticism is *per se* not a virtue but a vice, just as ignorance is: that persistent withdrawal from citizenship and the daily life of men, is a shirking of responsibility, not in itself a state of grace; that every imparted grace, every vantage gained by rest from conflict or withdrawal from turmoil, is an obligation to renewed activity in the cause of the truth of God and the service of man. Christ withdrew Himself oft into the desert or the garden for rest, for retirement, for prayer, but not that He might shirk the conflict of the coming day. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.

On the other hand, in the active imitation of Christ there lie difficulties and dangers enough. There is a temptation to over-zealous and hot-blooded men, in the very earnestness of their sincerity, to imitate the unusual activities of Jesus rather than the mildness and sweet reasonableness of his habitual mood. He could savagely denounce the brood of vipers, and trounce the hypocrites who came merely to catch Him in His discourse. The bitter wrangles with the priests and Pharisees which we find in the fourth Gospel, and which seem so sadly to traverse the beautiful and loving spirit, if not almost to lower the dignity of Jesus, are these to be the things in which we would imitate Him? Alas! the un-Christlike bitternesses of many old theological disputes are too sadly an imitation of these episodes, rather than of the sublime self-renunciation of the closing scenes. It may be right—for the few only, certainly not for the many, and only upon due occasion—in defence of truth and right against the aggressions and assumptions of bigots, to speak strongly and plainly, even to seeming harshness. It may even be right, on occasion, to imitate the Christ in driving out the intruders, the profit-seeking financiers and paganistic ceremonialists, from the temple of God; not by violence, as with the whip of small cords, with which He drove out the sheep and oxen, but with the more effectual scourge of an enlightened and fearless exposure. Idolatries within the Temple, no less than Pagan debaucheries without, call for holy courage of action. Every great movement toward the purification of religion has required men who would dare, even in this respect, to follow the

Christ. But for the most part of us, should we attempt any such course we would assuredly deserve the rebuke of the Master, uttered to the sons of thunder who proposed to call down fire from heaven—"Ye know not what spirit ye are of."

Rather will the imitation required of us be of the humbler sort, as we move amongst the mass of our fellow-men, sharing their burdens, trying to bring life and hope and faith and charitableness and sweet reasonableness into their lives by exercising these imitable Christ-like virtues in our own. But this is the very antithesis of a monastic withdrawal from the world. Do we feel discouraged at the apparent helplessness of social forces to cope with existing moral disorder? Are we impressed by the sad failure of the Churches to fulfil their mission? Is any of us tempted under a sense of these failures to abandon effort and withdraw into a life of contemplative solitude apart from the struggles and sufferings of men, thinking this to be a worthy imitation of Christ? Let him hear the voice that cries to him :

*Come no further : not upon this road,
But on that other whither Christ has gone.*

CHAPTER IX

Materialism

MATERIALISM is the tendency of certain minds to materialise; the tendency consciously or unconsciously present to refer all phenomena of the spiritual world—all religious ideas and emotions—to reduce even all purely intellectual conceptions to that which is visible and tangible. By a materialist I mean one whose habit of mind is to measure all things by that which is obvious and which obtrudes itself upon the senses, one by whom the facts of the higher nature are, if recognised at all, set down as being mere efflorescences of the physical being, one who either fails to understand the reality of those higher emotions that make for religious life, or who while professedly religious fails to understand them as realities in themselves and can only grasp them by degrading them into concrete and material forms.

This definition is given at the outset because the term *materialism* has been used in a narrower and more technical sense to denote the body of ideas which were prevalent in Germany rather more than a quarter of a century ago when Buechner wrote his famous work *Kraft und Stoff—Force and Matter—*

or when Lange produced his *Geschichte des Materialismus*—*History of Materialism*—both of which have run through many editions in many languages. The leading philosophical proposition which runs through this German doctrine of materialism is that thought is a mere mechanico-chemical product of the brain. The religious emotions or impulses it for the most part ignores or treats as illogical by-products surviving from a credulous and unscientific age. Between this identification of thought with brain, and the doctrine of Haeckel, commonly called *monism*, there is little difference. The main feature which they have in common is this. Down to about the middle of the nineteenth century certain fixed ideas had prevailed as to certain branches of science. In biology there was a rooted conception that all different species were indisputably marked off from one another, implying a special and separate creation for each species. In chemistry there was the equally definite though arbitrary division of substances into inorganic and organic: with the received opinion that while inorganic compounds, such as salt or alum or flint, might be synthetically produced in the laboratory, the organic compounds such as albumen, sugar, quinine, indigo, could not be so produced by the synthesis of their elements, but were necessarily only the direct product of animal or vegetable life. But just at that time the progress of scientific discovery and patient investigation broke down these arbitrary concepts by clearly showing them to be in fact only built upon imperfect knowledge. The chemist Wöhler, he who first produced the metal aluminium out of common clay—a purely inorganic operation,—showed to a

startled world that an organic substance could be built up out of inorganic materials. It is true that albumen has not yet been synthesised ; but quinine and indigo have been, and many a score of other organic compounds. About the same time two great naturalists, Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin, were collecting and co-ordinating their data for the tremendous biological advance, which has gone on uninterruptedly to our time, the watch-words of which are Evolution, Origin of Species, Natural Selection. It was in the attempt to follow out the trend of these discoveries into further paths, to find in them some rational explanation of certain factors of experience for which hitherto no scientific explanation had been forthcoming, that Haeckel and Buechner, and Lange worked ; that Huxley in a different way also worked. The German philosophers, deeming that chemistry had shown the difference between organic and inorganic matter to have been reduced to questions of degree, proceeded to argue that similarly the distinction between mind and matter was no longer existent. Had not Moleschott uttered his famous dictum : *Ohne Phosphor kein Gedank* (*Without phosphorus, meaning phosphorus as a constituent of the matter of the brain, no thinking*). So suppressing the differences which experience had hitherto predicated as existent between mind and matter, between the organic and the inorganic, they proceeded to roll the two forcibly into one, and to dogmatise upon the whole and to saddle upon matter the responsibility for mind. "Brain," they declared, "secretes thought, just as the liver secretes bile." "Matter is the sole cause of mind." Alas for their attempt

to reduce to *one* that which had been regarded hitherto as philosophically *two* ! In their effort to make the facts of mental and moral experience fit to their theory of oneness, they had outrun the wider materialism of older generations, and produced a newer and more intolerant one, tenable only by ignoring three great facts of philosophic and religious history. The power of ideas, the triumphs of thought over force, the control of matter by mind. Of these particular dogmas of monism little more need be said. It is not so much to them as to the more general tendency to materialise that the term materialism is rightly assigned.

As a matter of fact, I shall have to deal rather with that other phase of materialism to which already allusion has been made, the materialism of professed religionists, who, having their spiritual vision dimmed or their spiritual hearing dulled, grasp at the material analogies by which spiritual truths have been illustrated, and mistake the concrete illustration for the abstract verity. This kind of materialising tendency, which very largely permeates the popular Christianity of our time, even to an extent of which few of us are aware, is perhaps an inevitable result of the historical descent of Christianity from Judaism and of its historical transmission from East to West. The fervid metaphors with which the Oriental mind surrounded and enriched its expressions of religious thought were in their day the natural and proper setting for the highest truths to which their prophets and seers had attained. But transmitted through a line of doctors and scholars trained in metaphysical subtlety, yet not capable of the critical faculty to discern where statement of perceived truth ended and

metaphor began, these very metaphors became crystallised into definite propositions and statements, some to be received as articles of creed, others to be handed on as historical facts. The pious Saint Thomas à Kempis in his cell, and the fervid Luther in his pulpit, were alike unable to detach themselves from the materialism which, even within the first four centuries, had settled down upon the faiths of the primitive Church. It took different forms, it is true, in the doctrines and beliefs of the Roman Church from those which it took in the Protestant Churches, but it meets us at almost every turn. We meet it more or less veiled in the phraseology of every sermon, we find it displayed in every text-book of theology, we see it flaunted in the ritual of the episcopal Churches, we have it embalmed in the propositions of the orthodox creeds. Nay, our civil and national life is being poisoned by the very same poison of materialism : we applaud the popular idol ; we run with the crowd after the obvious aim ; we support the scheme that pays or promises to pay, heedless of the invisible spiritual forces that beckon to far other courses.

Do you wish for illustrations to make my meaning more plain ? For examples that you may see on what basis I generalise ? They lie around everywhere, and the difficulty is not to find them, but to select. Let me begin with one that is obvious. I remember once examining in an old Latin missal, a beautiful manuscript of the fifteenth century, a miniature of exquisite design. It was in two parts. In the first part there was represented a crucifixion with the body of the Saviour upon the cross. Out of His side flowed drops of blood which a priest

below was collecting in a silver ewer. In the second part the same priest was seen with the same ewer presenting it to a kneeling company of monks, and beneath was emblazoned the text, "Drink ye all of it." Crude materialism could scarcely go further.

Take, as a second example, the text from the Epistle to the Philippians (chap. ii. 9, 10), where in fervour of soul, Paul, expatiating on the obedience of Christ, exclaims, "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess." In the older version, familiar from our childhood, the words *ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πάντων γόνα κάμψῃ* were less accurately translated "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." The simplest consideration of Paul's meaning will show that the passage is metaphorical, because he speaks of "things" (the Greek is simply a neuter plural), including things that have no knees, as bowing their knees. It is a general adjuration that in the worship of God, His manifestation of Himself in Jesus Christ should be duly honoured and admitted. But we know that a very large section of the Christian Church has attributed to the passage a very different intention, and, grasping at that which is obvious and material, has adopted the meaningless practice of genuflexion whenever the name of Jesus is pronounced. It would be equally reasonable to require the congregation to recite the confession whenever the name of Jesus is pronounced, because the text goes on to say that not only every knee shall bow but every tongue shall confess. The practice of the Anglican Church is a lamentable

triumph of material rendering over the spiritual interpretation.

There is nothing new in this materialising tendency. We have only to look into the records of the New Testament to see how Jesus Himself had to contend with it as it manifested itself both in His own disciples and in those around Him. When He bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they supposed He was commenting on their omission to bring bread with them. When He told them, as they sought Him by the Well of Samaria, that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, they at once asked, "Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?" When He announced to Nicodemus the proposition, "Except a man be born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God," Nicodemus, honest seeker after truth as he was, failed utterly to grasp the spiritual meaning of the words, and, materialising the proposition, asked how a man could be born when he is old? When Jesus said "I, if I be lifted up will draw all men after Me," they utterly failed to see His meaning, and the scribe who recorded His words for us showed his own lack of spiritual insight by adding the gloss: "this He said signifying what [kind of] death He should die." When later He told the Jews how He would give His flesh for the life of the world, they strove together saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Again and again must Jesus rebuke this incurable tendency to materialise. O ye of little faith! O fools and slow of heart! Having eyes see ye not, and having ears hear ye not? These rebukes against the materialistic interpretation of spiritual things, are

they not now needed more than ever, in a day when the material progress of civilisation, the growth of commerce, the rush for money-getting, the pride of dominion, the dominance of ecclesiastical organisations, the obsession of creeds, the new dogmatisms of speculative philosophy, conspire to crush out the still small voice of the Spirit?

Now the greater the intensity with which this fundamentally spiritual side of religious truth is borne in upon us the more clearly shall we be led out from the complications that have impeded the spiritual progress of others. We take it as an experimental fact of our spiritual experience that man is prone to fall into sin. With that experimental fact staring us in the face as a deplorable everyday thing, why should we need to pile up a huge theological structure upon the tradition of Adam eating forbidden fruit in Paradise? If every copy of Genesis were destroyed, and the Adam legend clean buried in oblivion, the fact of sin would still remain as a sad spiritual experience. We accept it as a second and still greater fact of experience, to many of us the greatest fact of all, that God does indeed communicate directly with the soul of man, that He has given to him a Light within, a guidance by His Holy Spirit, visiting, indwelling, convincing of righteousness, moulding life and conduct, guiding in judgment, directing and enlightening. When Solomon, amidst the material splendours of his newly-built temple, kneeled upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands to heaven, and prayed to Jahveh for a blessing upon the consummation of his labours, he interpolated in the form

of a query one of the sublimest of thoughts : " But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth ? Behold heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee ; how much less this house which I have builded ! " Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth ? Yes, for He has never left Himself without witness. Yes, He who inhabits the high and holy place will dwell with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit. Yes, because in the words of St. Paul, God has Himself shined into our hearts, bringing the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ ; because He was pleased to make known the glory of this mystery, which is " Christ in you the hope of glory. " With this inner guidance as a spiritual fact of our own experience, not to be gainsaid nor discounted by any adverse word of those within whose experience it may not have come, we may well be set free from many things that perplex and clog the religious life of those to whom no such vision has been vouchsafed. If we have found this immediate revelation of God in the soul to be a fact, what need have we of any priest ? Nay, any intermediation of any priest, of any *man*, however devoted his life, however exalted his spiritual insight, however deep his learning, between our own souls and our God is a pure impertinence. Will God indeed dwell with men on the earth ? Then let man stand aside nor dare to intrude. What passes between the soul of man and his Maker is in the highest sense of the word sacred ; let none be so presumptuous as to intervene or to pretend to mediate. And if the priest be an anachronism, an unneeded survival of pagan times, how much less is

any hierarchy of use? Think of all the bickerings and heart-burnings there have been about ecclesiastical domination. Think of all the disputes about apostolical succession. Think of all the trivialities, swollen into mountains as we meet them in the biographies of Newman or of Manning, that cling about the question of the so-called "validity of holy orders." Far removed indeed are all these fantastic and man-made systems of ecclesiastical polity from the words of Jesus, "*My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me.*" That Divine call, "Follow Me," is a holy order. If the priest is no longer a necessity, what about that farce of apostolical succession by the laying on of hands of a bishop? Of a bishop, forsooth, whose selection as such depended on the mere nomination of some prime minister who—in past time, at least—may have been a gambler, a swearer, and a debauchee! No, the true apostolical succession is to be found not here, but in the Divine anointing from within; and the call to minister to the spiritual wants of mankind is an inward and spiritual call needing no episcopal machinery to hand it on. It were idle to seek to build up the kingdom of heaven on earth by organising priests and archdeacons and bishops, ordained and elected by historical machinery, and consecrated with elaborate ceremonials. Lo here; lo there; call the conflicting voices of rival and hostile Churches. But neither here nor there is the kingdom of God: the kingdom of God is within you.

And if, thus, we have been absolved from the workings of materialism in ecclesiastical polity on the one hand, how has it fared with our spiritual

freedom in other directions? The rite of water-baptism, alike of infant or of adult, with its accompanying piece of materialistic jargon that thereby we have been made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, we may freely set aside as being of no importance and of much spiritual harm. Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience: not the material dropping of water by a priest, but the inward baptism of the spirit and of divine fire; that is what remains when the outward rite has been for ever discarded. And precisely on similar grounds do we find ourselves absolved from the celebration in any form whatever as a ceremony of that supper of the Lord around which there has grown in the lapse of centuries such a deplorable accretion of materialistic tradition. Nine-tenths of what has lately been written in the public press upon what is called "the reservation of the blessed sacrament" is due to a materialism from which the whole spirit of the teaching of Jesus has utterly vanished. Modern chemistry has had this salutary effect that it has rendered it for ever impossible for any educated person to believe in either transubstantiation or in consubstantiation as a fact. The bread remains bread; the wine remains the juice of the grape. But the spirit that even in the days of the disciples closed their ears and their eyes, and made them slow of heart to perceive the spiritual significance of things, and led them to take grosser and more material views, still dominates the ecclesiastical world. The views of Father Ignatius are just as much steeped in it as are the sermons of Bishop Gore. The popular hymns of

all the Churches furnish us with abundant evidence that after centuries of spiritual effort, and reformation upon reformation, the hand of the materialist still presses heavily upon the body ecclesiastical.

I say this advisedly, because in so many directions we find the influence of material ideas overriding the spiritual ideas. Take, as an example, the advice given by John Wesley so often quoted as the core of all his teaching: "Plead thou solely the blood of the Covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud stubborn soul." The materialism of John Wesley is of a totally different order from the materialism of the monkish miniature, which depicts the priest as receiving in a silver ewer the blood that falls from the crucified body of Christ; it is strictly orthodox in form, yet it is there most unmistakably. The phrase "The Covenant" brings up that hard and fast conception, so perverted from Scripture, which lies at the basis of the current theology of the day. Let us try to sketch in scientific language what that basis is. At the risk of seeming undevotional I must be brief.

God, who decreed from all eternity whatever should come to pass, after creating the world created our first parents upright and very good, and laid down a condition or contract with them that if they should be obedient they should have eternal life, but if disobedient eternal death. By disobeying in eating the forbidden fruit they broke this contract and so rendered themselves and all their descendants liable to eternal death, and became enemies to God and prone to evil continually. God's justice and His mercy were thereby placed in conflict. But even before this there had been

made in the Council of the Trinity before the worlds began another Covenant of Redemption, between God the Father and God the Son, to the effect that God the Father of His mercy appointed God the Son to be Redeemer on condition that if He humbled Himself so far as to take upon Him the human nature in union with His divine nature, and satisfy justice by giving obedience in their stead, even to suffering the accursed death of the cross, then God the Father would be willing to accept the sacrifice of the innocent instead of the guilty and would declare justice to be satisfied, and His consuming wrath to be appeased; yet not for the whole human race but only for such of them as should become so far acquainted and convinced of this celestial transaction as to profess their acceptance of it, and to become justified by their faith and have their sins forgiven in virtue of the satisfaction made to God the Father for them by virtue of the death of God the Son.

I trust that in all this I have in no wise, in the attempt to epitomise as briefly as possible the fundamental framework of the theology of the Free Churches, given offence to any earnest or devout mind. It is good sometimes to look straightly in the face plain unvarnished statements of dogmas that are more often met wrapped up in ornate phrase hallowed by usage and association. The irreverence, if any, is not in the baldness of statement, but in the artificial and material ideas which that bald statement reveals. And is it not after all grossly material, that lack of spiritual vision which cannot understand the love of the All-Father, nor the infinite pity and tenderness and

self-sacrifice of Jesus, without framing it all into a scheme of contracts and covenants, which presuppose a revengeful Deity who cannot be appeased except by blood, and who refuses even after supreme atonement has been made, to extend the benefits of that supreme atonement to such of the human race as fail, by no fault of their own, to hear of the circumstance? Nay, I will go further, and maintain not only that this supposed contract or plan of salvation in which the innocent is allowed to suffer for the guilty is a piece of intellectual materialism, I will say it is a piece of revolting heathenism which during the night of centuries has become engrafted into the creeds of Christendom in their transmission from their first source. The whole idea of expiation by a sacrifice of blood is, as every student of the primitive religions of mankind knows, a survival from antiquity, which even the nobler Jews before the captivity had learned to discard. "Hear the word of the Lord," said Isaiah. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord . . . I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow." And again the Psalmist: "The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite spirit."

After Christ's death it was, of course, entirely

natural that Jews steeped by tradition in the ideas of expiatory sacrifices of victims, and of the propitiation by blood of the anger of their tribal deity Jahveh, should, when they became followers of the new religion, bring with them much of their old beliefs and traditions, and should regard Christ as in some sense a sort of paschal lamb slain to expiate the sins of mankind. The wonder would, indeed, be if, with so large a proportion of Jews in the membership of the early Christian Church, such Judaistic doctrines had not largely prevailed. Nevertheless it is, when one comes to examine the evidence, most clear that this notion of an expiatory sacrifice to redeem mankind from eternal vengeance—a notion so deep rooted to-day in popular theology—was not the teaching of the primitive Church. Throughout the whole of the Acts of the Apostles, where we have sermon after sermon reported, there is not a single direct reference to any redemption by sacrifice, or to any supposed plan of salvation by sacrifice, except it be in one obscure phrase in chapter xx. where St. Paul exhorts the overseers of the Church at Ephesus to “feed the Church of God which He purchased” (or “acquired”) “with His own blood.” But even this phrase gives no countenance to the pagan doctrine of expiatory sacrifice; because, as the context shows, the blood referred to is not the blood of a lamb slain for a sacrifice at all; it is the blood of the shepherd who has laid down his life for his flock. The very words of our Lord, “*I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep,*” ought to save every one of us who may view with dismay this vanishing of the old tradition

of an atonement by blood, from feeling any hesitation. He Himself said that He was the man who gave His life for the sheep. If others, prejudiced by old traditions, inverted His words and represented Him as the sheep whose life was sacrificed for the man, they did His own words a terrible wrong. If any historical document can be relied upon to show what was the actual faith preached in apostolic times, and before the unedifying squabbles between the followers of St. Paul and those of St. Peter had led to distorted statements and special pleading, surely the Acts of the Apostles is that document. The early Church preached a salvation through the life of Christ, not through His death. But the simple fervour of the primitive Church gave place to less pure emotions. Bit by bit there rolled back into the Church the tide of Jewish tradition, of materialistic explanations, of man-made ideas. Later came the entrance and the dominance of Greek metaphysics, when St. Augustine and the fathers sought to translate into philosophical propositions the traditions of the Church and the glowing metaphors of her Apostles. Heedless of Christ's own words uttered some hours before His death, that He had finished the work which had been given Him to do, they created a system of theology which was all made to turn upon the sacrificial efficiency of His death upon the cross, and in so doing they opened the door to the entrance of all that grievous accretion of material ideas which has degraded the worship of the Churches ever since and filled them with ghastly and shameful images. A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, that was essentially a

Jewish mode of thought in the barbaric age. Jesus Himself rebuked this inhuman creed. But inhuman though this doctrine of an expiatory death is, it unhappily survives ; and even the details of that death are made to take their set parts in the theological scheme. To how few does it occur that there is a sad impiety in thinking of God as though He needed to be appeased by the killing of a victim ! Yet impiety it is. But if to consider the great All-Father as a monster only to be appeased by the shedding of innocent blood be an impiety, what are we to say of all that terrible, soul-searing, unedifying rhetoric, which has been current, and is still current, about the blood of Christ. Let us endeavour as reverently as possible to divest ourselves of all materialism on this point. The mediæval scribe who emblazoned in his missal the miniature of the crucifixion, showing the priest collecting in a silver ewer the drops of Christ's blood, was he any more materialist in his ideas than he who wrote "there is a fountain filled with blood" ? or than the street-preacher who exhorts his hearers to wash in the blood of Jesus ? Jewish tradition again is responsible for these terrible and revolting ideas. Based upon an erroneous physiology, they had become imbued with the notion that *the blood is the life*. For many of them, perhaps for many of us, the terms blood and life have become convertible mutually. But it is obvious that if we do not use the term blood in this pardonable metaphorical way as merely a synonym for life, we are in great danger of running into the grossest materialism. Blood consists of red and white corpuscles floating in serum. If we

mean *that*, let us be honest and say so. If by blood we merely use the word in a loose sense to mean life, then let us again be honest and say "life." When John Wesley said, "Plead thou solely the blood of the Covenant the ransom paid for thy soul," what did he mean? Away with the foul suggestion that he, saintly man, was thinking of red and white corpuscles floating in serum. No materialist was he, in his saintly heart, yet so under the dominance of materialistic phrases and modes of thought that these notions of covenant, of bargains to be ratified by payment, of expiatory sacrifices of victims, that he could not even when face to face with the eternal problem of helping man to overcome sin, get rid of this superstructure of theological jargon, and all the implications which it involves.

Let us just look one fact more straight in the face before we pass on. The Lord Jesus crowned His life of devotion and obedience, of service to God and service of man, by the most sublime act of self-renunciation: He was faithful unto death, even the death of the cross. After some hours of physical agony He died—died physically as the physicians tell us of a broken heart. The evidence for this they state to be that which is narrated by the evangelist John, namely, that when the soldiers came and found that Jesus was already dead, "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out water and blood," that is—physiologically stated—serum and blood. Now mark the significance of the circumstances. Hours before, during the agony of the garden, He had said that His work was finished. He was dead before

the soldiers came. His work for mankind was ended ; His life had been laid down ; all was over. In whatever sense you please to attribute the redemption of mankind to the life of Jesus or to the ending of that life upon the cross, all was over. The consummation was completed. He was dead. And not until *after* all was over was there that shedding of blood (by the spearing of His corpse) which in the materializing ideas of mediæval scribe and of modern hymn-writer was seized upon as if it were a fact of vital significance. To fix upon the wrong fact because it happens to appeal to the material eye, and to invest it with an importance that causes it utterly to obscure the true antecedent spiritual fact is characteristic of the materialist everywhere. Be it ours to seek everywhere, and in all things, and especially in things most sacred, to beware of this insidious tendency to degrade and lower the spiritual conception, to dim the spiritual eye.

It was their single-hearted, whole-souled devotion to the spiritual side of the Christian life, that enabled the early Quakers to cut themselves adrift from the mass of mediævalism with which they found the Churches of their day, Puritan as well as Popish to be encumbered. They saw that just as the crucifix had become in the Romish Churches an idolatrous symbol, so in the Puritan Churches their theological scheme had become an idol to be cast out. Even the symbol of the cross they rejected, deeming the wearing of a cross as an ornament to be unadvisable, liable to produce false religious emotions and to fix the thoughts on the physical death of Christ rather than upon His life for man.

Where no vision is, said the Preacher, the people

perish. Where no seer arises to pierce through the outer crusts of things, the people, the individuals, the nation, drift into traditional ways, and their life goes on in grooves. Atrophy of soul overtakes the individual who ceases to think for himself. When life runs on in the grooves of tradition, men are not called upon to obey the higher motives, which become quiescent, while the lower motives alone are brought into exercise. This is true not of social, political and intellectual life only : it is true of the religious life too. The nineteenth century saw many changes in the world : it saw new intellectual, new social, new political forces at work. It witnessed the rise of many conflicting elements destined some of them to work great changes in the future development of the world. But in the domain of religious thought it witnessed two great developments of materialism, one without and one within the organisation of the Churches calling themselves Christian. But the materialism that developed without has apparently spent itself in becoming itself an intolerant dogmatism. The assertive monism of Haeckel, the sad speculations of Maeterlinck, and the ravings of Nietzsche, are in the long run no more to be feared in their effect on religious life than the sonorous atheisms of Omar Khayyam. Quite other is the materialism which has developed within. The nineteenth century has seen the growth and predominance within the Anglican Church of a party with whom ceremonial, sacerdotalism, and ecclesiastical domination are nine-tenths of the working religion. It has witnessed the growth of new Nonconformist sects of strange power propagating wild materialistic creeds of blood and fire. From the materialism within the nominal pale

of Christianity there is much more to be feared than from that without. Along with all this the nation has become in many directions the prey to the lower motives and oblivious to the higher moral forces. The outrageous increase of gambling, the increasing expenditure on drink, the hideous race to grow rich at home, the lust for domination abroad, all these things may well fill us with anxiety for the future. Not until our Churches purify themselves from worldiness in their organisation, and from materialism in their creeds, not until they discover that religion is a life to be lived, a something not to be learned second-hand, not to be professed with the lips, not to be discharged by performing rites and ceremonies, will they recover their hold over the thinking portion of our nation. Not until they have learned that a nation's life consisteth not in things that it possesseth will they prosper. Nor will the spread of the kingdom of heaven amongst men be effectively promoted by the preachers of the so-called Christian Churches until they have seen how far the orthodox Christianity of our day has wandered away from Christ, nor until they shall have begun to understand the meaning of Christ's own words : "*The Kingdom of Heaven is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of God cometh not by observation. The Kingdom of God is within you.*"

CHAPTER X

Nehushtan

“And Jehovah said unto Moses, ‘Make thee a fiery serpent (*Nachash*) and set it upon a standard : and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeketh it, shall live.’ And Moses made a serpent of brass and set it upon the standard : and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived.”—NUMB. xxi. 8-9.

“... and he (Hezekiah) brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made : for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ; and he called it *Nehushtan* (that is a piece of brass).”—2 KINGS xviii. 4.

“**T**HERE are idols of the Temple, as well as of the Cave and of the Tribe.”

So spoke one to whom England owes much for the sane and unflinching course he held in the days when Oxford seemed to have fallen under the spell of the clerical party. There are serpents of the wilderness which have lost their primal significance and have become mere centres for the idolatries of the pious. There are holy things that have outlived their usefulness and cumber the way of holiness, mere stumbling-blocks in the path of the seeker after truth. Who will overthrow the idols ? Who will break the serpent in pieces ? Who will remove the stumbling-block out of the way ?

Clearly the duty of removing those things that have been seen to have lost their spiritual force,

and are now hindrances, not helps, to real religion, ought to fall upon the leaders of religious thought. It ought not to be left to the irreverent hands of the Sons of Belial. And yet if the accredited leaders of religious thought are too feeble or too blind, too much wrapped up in their organisations and their ceremonials, too much afraid of offending their own order or the powers of this world, then the task must fall to those who are in no sense leaders, but who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Should any one who considers himself a faithful adherent of the Church of Christ doubt the progressive nature of revelation, or revolt at the proposition that that which may be right and divinely ordered for the men of one age may be wrong and contrary to the Divine order for men of a later age, let him reflect on the history of the brazen serpent. The entire narrative, so far as it has been preserved, is quoted above. Moses, acting, as we are told, under Divine command, makes the brazen serpent and sets it up upon the standard. Hezekiah was the great king of whom we are told that he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and trusted in Jehovah the God of Israel, so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, who clave unto Jehovah and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments which Jehovah commanded Moses. And Hezekiah, acting equally under Divine command, destroyed the brazen serpent, derisively declaring that *Nachash* was merely *Nehushtan*—a brazen bauble. None of the commentators, the doctors, the Fathers, none of the Councils, orthodox or unorthodox, has ever even remotely suggested that the destructive act of King

Hezekiah was other than rightly and divinely ordered. For those who look to authority for guidance there cannot be any higher justification than this for an act of necessary iconoclasm—the destruction, open, avowed, contemptuous, of an eikon, an image, a symbol, which had outlived its good purpose and become an object of materialistic adoration, to be incensed and bowed down to.

In our days the spent pietisms of the past loom large in the worship as well as in the dogmas of current Christianity. Things which were in their day as useful ensigns in the wilderness have become fetiches in the temple, perverting the heart of the worshipper and diverting his gaze from the vision of the Divine. Men who in the twentieth century should be following the Christ are enslaved to Jewish modes of thought, hypnotised to pagan rites that have crept into Christianity in the course of its decadence from pristine simplicity, wedded to beliefs that clearly were never held by the Apostles. And all the while they conscientiously and devoutly follow these things, hallowed for them by long and sacred association, they are entirely unconscious how utterly and irrevocably the objects of their devotion have fallen into the position of that brazen serpent, have outlived their purpose and are but stumbling-blocks to faith; are literally idols of the temple, to be broken and cast out and banished with Idols of the cave and of the tribe.

But who, without giving offence to some of the most devout and heavenly-minded of living souls, can break to pieces the idol which thus surviving its usefulness and sitting in the temple of God has itself become worshipped as a thing Divine? The

acts of a Moses when he stamps to powder the golden bull, or of a Josiah when he tears the symbolic Asherah from the house of the Lord, and burns them at the brook Kidron and strews the powder on the graves of the people, or when he breaks down the pillars and the altar at Bethel and stamps them small to powder, are not to be repeated save by a Moses or a Josiah. The entirely sane and sublime anger that in a great and inspired leader carries him through iconoclasms such as those, with the respect, approval, and even assistance of the men of his age, falls not to the possession of the common man nor even of the thinker. Ordinary devotion, however unflinching, takes proportions less heroic. But if it is not ours to de-niche the idol, this at least we may do, namely, pull aside the hangings and let in the light of heaven, that all men may see that the idol is after all a mere bauble of brass, a thing earthly, material, man-made, a survival of a less enlightened age. This at least is no scorner's work.

Let us reflect how sadly the current theology of our time has missed the significance of the episode of the brazen serpent. In the fourth Gospel, in the narrative of the secret visit of Nicodemus, Jesus is recorded to have said to him these words: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15). The context does not furnish any very obvious application of this simile. Christ had been suggesting to Nicodemus that he was not in the attitude of mind to receive heavenly things that might be told him: that no man had ascended into heaven, so that the knowledge of heavenly things

possessed by a Son of man who had descended from heaven must be unique, and that God had so loved the world that He had sent His unique Son ; who-soever, therefore, should believe the heavenly things revealed in Him might through Him learn that he was not doomed to destruction but to immortality, not to judgment, for that was already passed, but to salvation ; for reprobation equally with approbation consisted in the revelation of light in the darkness. Now all this, so far as it is a commentary at all upon the simile of the brazen serpent, demonstrates how purely the allusion was a simile. The episode of the serpent in the wilderness, familiar as it must have been to the "Master in Israel," recalled to him an objective symbol which had been set up upon a standard or pedestal for a plague-stricken people to gaze at that they might be awakened from the stupor of death. If the simile suggested anything it intimated that the Son of man, heaven-descended, should be set before a sin-stricken world as an objective symbol of Divine life, at whom gazing the stricken one might be awakened from the stupor of moral death : further, if perhaps the context is to be read into the simile, that he might realise that death and judgment were already passed, that Divine love as of a Father must be reckoned as amongst the things now revealed, with life and immortality.

The scholars, who have not always seen the true inward bearing of things, have had much to say of the brazen serpent in relation to the serpent-worships of primitive man as now discovered by ethnologists in so many divers countries and races. And of all this there has been little that is helpful. The brazen serpent erected by Moses may have been as literally

a relic of the ophiolatry of Egypt as the golden bull (or calf) made by Aaron was of the worship of Apis. If it were, that admission does not prove that Moses was not well-inspired in using it as a symbol of life amongst the serpent-bitten tribe whom he led. Still less does it disprove the value and meaning of the simile with which Jesus strove to explain Himself and His mission to the truth-seeking Pharisee during his clandestine visit. What is important is that neither in the original purpose of Moses in the exhibition of the serpent in the wilderness, nor in the subsequent and parabolic reference to it by Christ, did the elevation of the serpent have any sacrificial significance or function whatever. The serpent was lifted up as a symbol of life, restoration, health, an objective to stimulate vision and hope, and in no sense as a sacrifice. Worship was not offered to it, neither was it offered in worship. All this is abundantly plain. And to be lifted up even so did it, behove the Son of man: οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου! He was to be lifted up, raised up, elevated, set upon a pedestal as a symbol of life, restoration, health, an objective to stimulate vision and hope, to bring life and immortality to light—and in no sense as a sacrifice. That is the true, the only fair or logical deduction from the passage as it stands in the narrative of the visit of Nicodemus.

“For God so loved the world,” so runs the next verse of the conversation with Nicodemus, “that He gave His unique Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Here was the promise of immortality announced to mankind, to as many as should believe in the living Christ. Obviously, being uttered by

Christ in the earliest days of His ministry, it had nothing to do with His murder some three years later. No shadow of coming death had as yet fallen upon His ministry, or clouded the meridian of His career. It was an announcement of the free gift of God, and involved no other belief than that God had sent His unique Son not to condemn the world, but as a token of His saving love.

It has long been known to scholars that the participle "only begotten," which we find both in the Authorised and in the Revised Versions as the translation of the word *μονογενής* (literally *mono-genic*) is a faulty rendering, and that the true reading is "the only one of His kind," or "unique." The erroneous meaning conveyed by the usual translation "only-begotten" crept in early in the history of Christianity, as may be seen by comparing the corresponding terms used in Latin. In the Vulgate as printed the term is "uni-genitus," while in the earliest versions of the Creeds the word stands "unicus." But as Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out, the same adjective occurs¹ in the Epistle of

¹ On this Canon H: Rashdall has remarked: "In the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome the word is applied to the Phoenix, that fabulous bird which was supposed to be the only living specimen of its kind, and to die after 500 years, leaving an egg which, hatched (according to one version of the story) by the heat of its parents' funeral pyres, produced a new bird to carry on the solitary succession. The story—implicitly believed alike by cultivated pagan writers and by the Christian Fathers—exactly illustrates the meaning which it originally bore in Christian theology. There never was more than one Phoenix at a time: that solitary individual formed, as it were, a kind by itself. So when St. John applied the term to Jesus Christ, he meant to indicate that the expression 'Son of God' is used of Him in a sense in which it can be applied to none other."

The passage in the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome, xxv. 2 runs thus: ὄρνειον γὰρ ἐστὶν ὃ προσονομάζεται φοῖνιξ. Τοῦτο μονογενὲς ὑπάρχον ζῷ ἔτη πεντακόσια. (Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 19).

Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, written about A.D. 95, and is there used in a sense which absolutely precludes the idea usually conveyed by the words "only begotten."

It is worth while to note that the same term *μονογενής* occurs in Luke vii. 12, in a passage where it cannot be rendered "only begotten," but must be translated as "only," and which in our English version runs thus: "Behold, there was carried out dead the *only* son of his mother, and she was a widow." Alas what a load of diseased word-battling would have been saved to the world had but the mediæval Churchmen adhered to the earlier rendering of the Greek, and not blundered into translating the word as "uni-genitus" or "only begotten," thus importing an erroneous idea which grew into a dogma to perplex and bewilder simple souls. All the phrases of technical theology "begotten before the worlds," "begotten not made," "eternal generation of the Son," might have been spared from encumbering the creeds and the commentaries. It confuses and distorts the whole idea of Divine Sonship thus to substitute the false for the true translation. There is a sense in which all men are sons of God—children of the Most High. There is yet a further sense in which those become sons of God whose lives are consciously surrendered to Him, to whom in a special way He has become identified as their Father. But there still remains a third and higher sense in which Jesus was the Son of God, as the one human being in whom the Divine life shone forth as revealing the Father to man. He was indeed, as Paul said in writing to the Romans, the first-born (*πρωτότοκος*) amongst many brethren :

yet they might become sons because He had been manifested as a Son, and in that manifestation He was the only one of His kind, the Unique Son.

In the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, in the very passage in which the paradigm of the brazen serpent occurs, Jesus applied to Himself twice, apparently for the first time, a phrase which is in this collocation significant—the Son of man, *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, literally, “the Son of the man.” Not the son of the woman, but the Son of the man. Of what man? This the very simplest, most obvious, most natural inquiry as to the meaning of the words, raises that bitterest of theological questions which for sixteen centuries has devastated Christian thought. It is idle to say that the question cannot now be raised, that it is not an open question, that the Church has decided it once for all. The Church, in that sense, can close no question that cannot be opened by any man whose soul is not the slave of organisations. The Church cannot, even if it would, erase from its own Bibles the words of Peter in his very first sermon in Jerusalem, words which both as spoken, and as recorded, antedate not only every Council or Synod of “the Church,” but also all of the Gospels, and are of a thousand-fold weightier authority than any subsequent pronouncement could be: “the patriarch David . . . being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that *of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh*, He would raise up Christ . . .” (Acts ii. 29–30). If this is not a definite statement by Peter that Jesus Christ

was the son of David by human descent—according to the flesh,—then words have no meaning whatever. And the genealogy given by Luke (iii. 23) and the genealogy, given by Matthew (i. 16), in which the lineal descendant of David, Joseph, is set down as the father of Jesus, are, if they do not mean the same thing, absolutely gratuitous and irrelevant. The self-chosen title, Son of man, in itself suffices to stamp the legend of abnormal birth as a legend. A pious legend, doubtless, and one entirely human and natural in its Oriental surroundings ; exactly the kind of sacred legend that amongst every primitive people grows up around any hero of commanding personality. One has only to compare the accounts given of miraculous births of Buddha, of Plato in Diogenes Laërtius, of Moses in the Talmud, to say nothing of several other saviours in other religions, to realise how entirely the attribution of a virgin birth to any superhuman-seeming person was consonant with the attitude of adoration : how such an ascription would be regarded as a pious act quite irrespective of historic facts. Those who have never inquired into this matter, or have never even attempted to comprehend the frame of mind which regards the adoring legend, because it is adoring, as of vastly greater moment than the historic truth is because it is true, cannot understand how the reverent seeker after truth in these days can frankly admit that some of the things supposed by our forefathers to be a vital part of religion are myth, and yet not lose his reverence towards those good men and women whose pious hearts wove, repeated, believed, and were edified and even spiritually strengthened by believing those myths. To each

age its own conception of the Divine stands to serve its own purpose. And the age which finds it better to hold simple unvarnished truth than to weave pious fancies, must not harshly condemn the age which thought it greater honour to God to weave those pious fancies than even to ask what the mere facts were. It will not do for the twentieth century to rise up in judgment against the second century, nor for the Western mind to rivet condemnation upon the Eastern, because the Eastern mind of the second century took different views of life and truth from those which the Western of the twentieth century takes. To the ignorant of all ages that which is abnormal has always presented itself as something sacred. To the Oriental mind, untutored in science, the abnormal still presents something calling forth an instinct of reverential worship. Of very recent growth, even among the better educated of Westerns, is the idea of the reign of law. We forget too often that in this respect a great chasm lies between the England of Edward VI. and the England of Edward VII. Only those who either fail to understand or else despise the reign of law and all that that phrase connotes, and who ignore the teachings of biology, can believe an abnormal birth to be more sacred than a normal birth. But those who have attained to this scientific clearness of vision, and can see as a simple and obvious truth that in abnormality there is nothing of itself that is sacred, that the normal is just as sacred as the abnormal, must not, because this is obvious to them, despise or condemn those who in the pre-scientific ages did attribute some sort of sacredness to abnormality, and would have thought it derogatory

to the person whom they worshipped as Divine to be a man in the fashion of his birth as well as in the fashion of his death. For the question is not one of virgin birth or non-virgin birth as such : it is a question of normality or abnormality. The phenomenon of virgin—that is to say asexual—birth is by no means unknown in science. Parthenogenesis is a phenomenon perfectly well-known to the biologist. The *aphis* or green plant-louse is parthenogenetic : yet no one dreams of thinking it a sacred insect. In this particular instance parthenogenesis is the normal mode of generation. Is a tree that is propagated by cuttings any more sacred than one that is propagated by duly fertilised seeds ? Of course not, every one will say ; and some may resent as irrelevant any such question in this connexion. But is it irrelevant ? Suppose an abnormal asexual birth to take place in London next week : would any educated Western regard it as anything sacred ? Time was when a hunchback was thought to be sacred, and that touching his hump was believed to bring health or good fortune to the person touching it. Does any one now believe any such thing ? Until we can put ourselves back into the frame of mind which believed—honestly and sincerely believed—in the virtue of touching the hunchback's hump, and which held a virgin birth to be more sacred than a normal birth, we shall be unable to realise how those who held such beliefs thought it to be honouring to Christ, to be a holy and commendable act, to spread the tale of His abnormal origin. Now, as a plain matter of fact, thousands of our fellow-creatures are of the Oriental frame of mind : and thousands of Westerns are not

yet educated, but hold beliefs in the virtues of the hunchback, and in the sacredness of abnormality. Shall we therefore condemn them? Shall we condemn the pietism which still clings to the traditions of the mediæval Churchmen, and would do honour by ascribing abnormality? A thousand times no. Let those believe it who can. Why anger them by denouncing them for their pious traditions? Let in the light, yes, that we may. To denounce them because of their inability to see that what they honour is become an idol of the temple, is not for us. For us, let us see to it that our faith is no less fruitful than theirs for the service of our fellow-men. The gospel of Jesus Christ, His message and mission to the human race, needs no such failing prop to support its worth or to demonstrate its eternal truth. The uninstructed non-scientific anthropomorphism which could only conceive of one wholly human yet also Divine by imagining, in the fashion of the pagan mythologies a being having one human parent and one Divine parent, has left us a conception that ends by making Jesus only half-man, and therefore only half-God. The Roman Church, by its modern dogma of "the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin," carries the process back one stage further, and leaves us with a Jesus who is one-quarter man and three-quarters God. Unless there were to be predicated a whole line of immaculate conceptions and virgin births backwards into the indefinite past (and this would exclude David and Adam, equally with Joseph, out of the line of progenitors of our Lord) the fraction of human "taint" would always remain. We have got to clear our minds of these materialistic, these non-scientific, these atheistical

conceptions, and return to the infinite truth that God is Spirit : that the Fatherhood of God, both in the general sense and in the higher sense in which He was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who was one with Him, is not to be "explained," nor declared, nor defined by any incoherent efforts to materialise it by a semi-physical parentage.¹ Let us abandon frankly, as belonging to the childhood of religions, these unworthy and human attempts to encompass the Divine, and let us boldly claim that Jesus was not half, nor one-quarter, but wholly human, and that in a far higher sense than any materialising Church dogma or tradition can pretend, He was also wholly Divine : *God manifested in the flesh.*

Amongst the idols of the temple left by the pious hands of an earlier generation is a legacy of Hebrew conceptions known as types. From our earliest childhood we have been made familiar with the accounts of the sacrifices of bulls and goats, with the burnt-offerings and sin-offerings, with the ghastly details of the temple ritual, with the horrors of the professional shambles set up in Jerusalem. That the smoke of the fat of the victims ascended as a grateful savour to the Lord, seemed a perfectly

¹ Incoherent, because the attempt breaks down with its own effort to state itself. There is no irreverence in stating facts in plain language : if there is any irreverence it is in the facts themselves. But the facts are that whereas Jesus spoke (to put it in theological terms) of the First Person of the Trinity as His Father, the account in Luke states that the Third Person of the Trinity was His Father. If we are not to be guilty of "confounding the persons," it follows that Jesus was not the Son of the Father and the Father was not the father of the Son. All this sounds horribly irreverent : but—the irreverence does not lie in the statement. It lies in the whole mass of crude materialistic ideas by which the piety of the early Fathers of the Church sought to express spiritual and transcendental conceptions.

natural statement ; that the blood of the slain beasts, poured down from the altar over the temple floor, did not strike us as an abominable thing. It was all unreal to us, we had never seen it ; it was, we were told, all typical of something in the New Testament. Perhaps a little later we heard of the horrors of the Mexican worships, of the Scandinavian varieties of sacrifice. We learned of the animal sacrifices of the Greeks or of pagan Rome. Modern ethnology has done mankind a vast service in collecting and correlating data as to the many early forms of human "worship," horrible and uncouth ; it has shown us that, save in that it had (at least from the time of Jephthah downwards) substituted animal sacrifices for human sacrifices, the primitive Hebrew ritual was as ghastly in its performance as almost any other of these savage practices. Revolting as are the provisions of the temple worship in all these things, they have left an indelible mark upon the purer religion of Christ. While it is true that in the later Hebrew history, and particularly after the Captivity, the best and most gifted of the prophets had risen above the horrid materialism which marked the earlier epoch, they could not eliminate from the religious language of their own time, much less from that of the Apostolic time, the technical phrases of the earlier ritual. Even the Psalmist could say, "Thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it ; Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit : a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And yet the Psalmist goes on to say : "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt

offering and whole burnt offering ; then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar." And Isaiah could write : " To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me ? saith Jahveh : I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto Me." Yet even after the captivity we find Ezekiel writing ordinances of the altar, sprinkling it with blood, and smearing blood on the corners of it, with courses of sacrifices of goats, bullocks, and rams for seven days ; and this was followed by regulations for burning a lamb's carcase, morning by morning, and for burning an offering of meal moistened with oil, and for boiling-houses where the temple servants were to boil the carcases offered as sacrifices by the people. Hosea wrote : " For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings," and yet he could not escape from the language of the temple ritual, for he wrote also : " O Israel, return unto Jahveh thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and return unto Jahveh : say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously : so will we render *as bullocks* the offering of our lips." In like manner Joel wrote : " Yet even now, saith Jahveh, turn ye unto Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning ; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto Jahveh your God ; for He is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, *even a*

meal offering and a drink offering unto Jahveh your God?" The religious thought of the entire Jewish nation was, in fact, steeped in the notion of expiatory sacrifices, of the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, or for warding off the anger of Jahveh. It had not, in spite of the utterances of its prophets and poets, risen to the conception that God was really slow to anger, plenteous in mercy, and that He forgave iniquity and transgression to the repentant sinner without any sacrifice of an expiatory victim, living or dead, upon the altar.

If we search through the whole of the Gospels we shall not find that on any occasion Jesus took part in any of the temple sacrifices. Indeed, it is significant how completely he ignored from first to last the sacrificial side of the Jewish religion. In five passages only (one of them repeated by the three synoptic writers) do we find any direct allusion to any offering at the altar. In Matthew v. 24 Christ spoke of the man who, offering a gift at the altar, should there remember that his brother had any unreconciled quarrel with him, and bade him go and be reconciled before he should complete the offering of the gift. In Matthew viii. 4 he tells the man who was cleansed of leprosy to offer the gift that Moses commanded, a thank-offering for cleansing. In Mark ix. 49 he remarked that every sacrifice (or in the R.V. "every one") shall be salted with salt. In Mark xii. 50 he commended, as not far from the kingdom of God, the scribe who said to Him that to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbour as one's self, was much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Finally, in Mark xiv. 12, on the day "when they

sacrificed the Passover," He told His disciples how to find a room where they should eat the paschal meal. Save for this last recognition of the national ceremony of the paschal feast, none of the cases gives countenance to blood offerings or expiations. It is clear that Jesus steadily ignored them, and regarded them of no importance relatively to the common duty of love to God and man.

In the primitive community of the apostolic time, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, there are but two references to sacrifices, one to the pagan sacrifice which the high priest of Zeus, at Lystra, proposed to offer to Paul and Barnabas, the other in the narrative of Paul's purification of himself at the request of James and the elders in Jerusalem, when he and four others, who were under a vow, went into the temple to fulfil the days of purification, "until the offering was offered for every one of them." So then it is clear, save for this formal and exceptional compliance with Jewish rites by Paul for the express purpose of conciliating criticism, the temple ritual of expiatory sacrifices was consistently ignored by the Apostles. Still more striking is it that throughout the whole of the Acts of the Apostles, where sermon after sermon is reported, there is not one single reference to the Hebrew sacrifices as *types*. The primitive Churches knew nothing of types; their Christianity was too real, too personal, to need any fanciful presentation to them. Life and immortality had been brought to light by Christ. From any suggestion that the murder of their revered Master had been an expiatory sacrifice, they would have recoiled with horror and indignation. His resurrection was the

great fact that overtopped every other, and wrought in them an overpowering sense of triumph and rejoicing. To apply to Him the language of the temple shambles would have seemed truly degrading. When Saint Bonaventura, dilating on the joys of the saints in the Day of Judgment, counts this amongst them that "He shall wash His hands in the blood of the sinner," he is using a metaphor which, however natural to one accustomed to the sights of the Hebrew sacrifice, is simply revolting to any right-minded modern. No less revolting is the degradation of language preserved to us in a hymn still sung in some Protestant churches :—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

For that ghastly conception it is difficult to express adequate condemnation.

Yet another of the idols of the temple which have been lifted up by pious hands is the quantitative prayer. Prayer, as the spontaneous and sincere outpouring of the fullness of the heart, is as natural as is the broken speech of infants who feel a sense of need that is not always readily framed into words. Prayer, vocal prayer, voicing the united spiritual hunger of a congregation, and rising spontaneously into utterance, not droned out from a litany by an uninspired and uninspiring professional, is an inherently vital part of public worship. But prayer manufactured, prearranged, concerted, to be uttered in a vast number of congregations at once, as if to impress the Almighty by the importance of mere

numbers, is a piece of the veriest superstition. One of the least superstitious of Nonconformist bodies in England, in a recent annual bulletin, when recommending its congregations to prayer, added : "such a volume of prayer cannot fail." As though the efficacy of prayer were to be measured by the number of people praying or the quantity of their prayers ! One's thoughts go back to Elijah's mocking words to the priests of Baal : "Cry aloud for he is a god ; peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened." What ideas those have of the Most High who think that He can be moved by a "volume" of preconcerted prayers ? In what respect are they more enlightened than the devout Oriental who turns his praying wheel before the image of Buddha ? Not thus is the uplifting of the heart to be organised into efficacy.

Nor is the conception of the Highest honoured or raised by those material instruments of devotion, the altars, the obelisks, and the pillars which figured so largely as religious objects in the childhood of the world. If primitive Christianity abolished the sacrifice and the priesthood, it also abolished the altar. Never, save in connection with the Pagan worship at Lystra and at Athens, is any altar mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. No Christian altar is ever mentioned by St. Paul. The primitive Church knew it not. In the New Jerusalem of Apocalyptic vision there was a throne, but no altar. The apostolic Fathers recognised none. There is none mentioned, nor any altar service of any kind, until more than two centuries had elapsed from the death of Christ. The pillars and obelisks so frequently set up by the Israelites had vanished

centuries before. Slowly but inevitably was man learning the lesson that He who giveth to all creatures life and breath and all things is not to be served by men's hands as though he needed anything. Altars, pillars, temples, oblations, eucharists, all alike were superfluous when once it had been recognised that God dwelt not in temples made with hands, and was to be worshipped neither on Mount Gerizim nor Mount Zion, more than in any other spot; that worship consisted not in the lifting up of the hands, nor in the offering, actual or representative, of any sacrifice; that a spiritual worship, a dedication of the life, was the one thing that the spirit of man could offer to his Maker. "Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I am come. In the roll of the book it is prescribed for me: I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

Need it be added that amongst the idols of the temple, which even yet are occasionally brought out when the purpose arises, are those saddening records of Israelitish history when, acting as they deemed under the direct orders of Jahveh, they carried fire and sword against the surrounding tribes, massacring in cold blood, and preserving only the young girls whom they captured as their prey. Christianity must indeed be in a perilous state if it cannot now frankly disavow these crimes, and admit that the narrative of them is a piece of primitive history, embedded indeed in the sacred record, but that its preservation there lends no countenance to such deeds. Not that we would excise them from their context in the Old Testament—far otherwise. Their presence there most

effectually demonstrates the value of the Old Testament books, and gives invaluable warning that we should not mistake those books for what they are not. The fact that some atrocious crime is recounted as having been conducted under the command, "Thus saith Jahveh," does not, by being found in the Old Testament, prove that the Almighty commanded anything of the kind. What it does prove is the extremely imperfect civilisation, not to say the extremely imperfect religious sense, of the recorders who have thus left on record that they could imagine the Almighty as the tribal deity commanding bloody extermination against a neighbouring tribe. When in the opening of the twentieth century we find dignitaries of the Anglican Church, no less than certain Nonconformist divines, appealing to these Hebrew atrocities as a justification to a Christian nation in making warfare, because the records present them as having been commanded by Jahveh Himself, we may well say that it is time to cast out and break in pieces these idols of the temple. Infamies are not less infamous because those who wrought and recorded them thought to do God service. But if now to justify fire and sword, red ruin and the breaking up of laws, these ancient infamies are brought forward, every right-minded man will well say that a "Christianity" which cannot rise superior to these very imperfect beliefs about God, is not really Christianity at all, and is no better than heathenism.

"'Tis ethnic and idolatrous
From heathenism preserved to us."

Better an honest pagan faith than a "Christianity" so unworthy of Christ.

Lastly, amongst the heritages of the past that may once have been symbols serving some useful purpose, is that old Hebrew aphorism, that "the blood is the life." The pious schoolmaster expounding Old Testament types still teaches that the sacrifice of Abel was more acceptable to God than that of Cain, because Cain's was bloodless. But modern physiology will not follow him when he repeats the old error that the blood is the life. Neither historic truth nor real religion is benefited by representing what is not true. Jesus Christ was already dead before the soldier, by piercing His side, caused His blood to flow forth. The world was not saved by an outrage perpetrated on a corpse. Those who—even in all sincerity, like the preachers of the Salvation Army—represent that the salvation of mankind depended on the shedding of the blood of Jesus, are simply declaring that which is not true. They have elevated an exquisite Oriental simile, true and useful for its own time and place, into a hideous idol, none the less idolatrous because thousands still believe it to be the power of God unto salvation. Yet it must go with the brazen serpent into the limbo of the outcast idols. To teach men to believe a lie will never raise mankind. To elevate that lie into a dogma is to deny the real work of Christ. To reconcile men to the Divine Will, to lead them to God, to inspire their lives with His own gracious spirit, to turn them from darkness to light, that was His work. As He was raised from the dead, so must men rise from the dead into newness of life. As He devoted His life to deliver many, so must they devote their lives for the many. As He was obedient even to death, so must they also

be obedient. They must press forward to the goal for the prize of the upward call by bringing every act, every thought even, into captivity to the heavenly will, into conformity with the Divine Order. Only so shall the sons of men be lifted up.

CHAPTER XI

The Duty of Choice

“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”—JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

Ἐκλέξασθε ὑμῖν ἑαυτοῖς σήμερον τίνι λατρεύσητε (Septuagint).

MOST of us, without being conscious of it, grow up in a set of religious ideas and beliefs simply as the result of our environment from birth. We grow up in a certain spiritual atmosphere, and breathe it in as a part of our national and racial inheritance. The outward religion of men is at least largely determined by that of the nation into which they are born ; and they adopt it more or less unconsciously without discussion or deliberation.

Very few men, in all probability, set themselves in any calm philosophic mood to consider whether they shall choose for themselves a religion, or having so far decided that they will adopt a religion, proceed to investigate what sort of religion they will choose. To the great mass the choice of a religion does not come about in that way : it is made not with scientific deliberation but under stress of emotion. Anguish of soul, restlessness under a conviction of sin, sorrow under bereavement, joy in a sense of spiritual fellowship, pure altruistic pleasure in acts of kindness toward others, pity toward

human degradation and misery, horror at the blankness of a destiny without hope, these are forces which impel men to choose a religion ; and the choice so made under emotional rather than intellectual pressure, is not the result of deliberate investigation. If we assume that this is the right and natural order of things, and admit that the intense convictions that drive men to decisions in matters of religion lie in the province of emotion rather than in that of thought, we are but accepting as axiomatic that which experience and history, at least in a majority of cases, affirm.

And yet it is possible, nay commendable—yes, and in some cases even a matter of sacred duty—to consider with calm deliberation this question of the choice of a religion.

The phrase itself may be understood, however, in different senses, according to the meaning we attach to the term “religion.” If by “religion” we mean the particular rule of life, or working faith, by which a man’s life is guided and conducted, the sum-total of the convictions which dominate his actions, thoughts, and words, then the question of choice becomes of enormous importance. If by “religion” we mean merely a formulated creed or set of beliefs which a man professes irrespective of his conduct and actions, the question of choice, however interesting from the historical point of view, is of extremely little moment ; or, if we mean merely the outward conformity to some sort of ceremonial observances, as when an Anglican has been baptized and confirmed, and follows all the prescribed Ordinances without ever inquiring or thinking what it all means. But, again, if by “religion” we mean the practice of a

body of persons, who, as a Church or society, conform together with respect to any particular matters of faith, or of ceremonials, or rules of conduct, the question of choice again assumes a matter of practical importance to the individual choosing.

The subject, therefore, divides itself naturally into two parts—(1) the choice of a working faith as a rule of life, and (2) the choice of a community or denomination with which to enter into fellowship as to dogma, ceremonial, and service.

Any religion of formulated profession apart from conduct, or which is regarded as consisting only in the due performance of ceremonial observances, may be here omitted as ignoble and useless.

But before we can enter on any discussion of the choice of a religion as a spiritual rule of life, we are bound to consider an objection that is brought *a priori* before us by those thinkers who traverse the whole matter, denying that we have any freedom of choice, such as the title of the subject implies.

This is not the place to enter on any discussion of the old battle of Freedom of the Will as against the domination of irrevocable Destiny. While it is true that modern science has been invoked in favour of Determinism, on the ground that in the physical world every action is the result of pre-existing and determinate causes, and is subject to the laws of the conservation of energy, it is nevertheless equally true that modern science has shown that there are in operation selective forces which do not involve any expenditure of energy, their action being purely directive, not energetic. With the recognition of these anergic forces the argument based on the physical law of the conservation of energy vanishes.

But if modern science is not thus to be invoked in favour of a rigid determination of every action as the effect of antecedent causes which are themselves in turn equally antecedently determinate, it assuredly gives no licence to loose thinking as to the inevitableness of natural laws either in the world of matter or in that of mind and soul. Causes do result in effects ; and the effects remain. The children do still have to suffer for the sins of their fathers. Prayer does not restore an amputated limb, nor faith remove a hereditary taint of disease. In this sense we are as subject to the inevitable working of laws as the most rigid Necessitarian would lay down.

“The moving Finger writes, and having writ
Moves on. Nor all your piety nor wit
Will lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out one word of it.”

When we assert, against the Necessitarians, the freedom of the will, we are asserting not that the laws of nature are not sure and inevitable, but that man, so far as he is able to set the laws of nature to work, is the master to choose, at least in many cases and within wide limits, whether, and when, and in what degree, they shall come into operation. And it is in this same sense that we assert also the freedom of the soul to make choice in matters of religious belief. Spiritual laws exist, but we are free to choose in many things as to whether they shall come into operation. At one period or another the soul must treat every religious truth as an open question, and exercise a spiritual judgment in arriving at a decision thereon : that is what we mean by freedom of choice in matters of religious belief.

It is everyday knowledge that in the orthodox

Churches, Roman, Greek, and Anglican, the right of private judgment in matters of belief is flatly denied : the Church itself, in each of these three sects, maintains its sole right to lay down what is permissible in matters of belief. It brands as heretic and sceptic him who dares to choose for himself. St. Augustine, a man of great religious experience and insight, one whose thoughts after sixteen centuries still sway many of our accepted beliefs, held the view that Original Sin, in the inherited transgression of our first parents Adam and Eve, deprived men of freedom of choice. We are not likely to accept nowadays any such fantastical proposition. Dr. Pusey, in his "Rule of Faith," lays down broadly the dictum : "We were not meant ourselves to have any choice." The phrase appears to admit that we really have a freedom of choice, but to imply that we have no right to exercise it ; that to choose would, in fact, be sinful or contrary to the Divine intention. The attitude of mind revealed by this sentence is very significant. Though the faculty of judgment, of spiritual discernment, has been given to us, we are not meant to exercise it. It is as though one should say to a man who used his eyes to observe where he was going—"My friend, we were not meant ourselves to have any sight : we must walk by faith, and see only what the proper authorities allow us to see." That is the voice of the ecclesiastic everywhere, and in every age.

Entirely otherwise sound the voices of the seers, the prophets, the men of instinctive vision and spiritual purpose. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," was the call of Joshua to those who halted between the service of Jahveh and the service

of the gods beyond the River. "These were more noble," we read in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the men of Berœa, "than those in Thessalonika, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily whether these things were so." Jesus Christ Himself, in one of His discourses, according to the Gospel of Luke, appealed to the crowd about Him with the memorable words : "And why do ye not even of your own selves judge what is right?" This appeal to the personal perception of right may be paralleled by the apostolic injunction, "Prove all things : hold fast that which is good." Both Christ and His Apostle recognise the duty of private judgment ; both recognise the innate instinct to search for the truth, and commend it. To discover for one's self what truth is, and having seen it to follow it, that is a privilege not to be curtailed, a duty not to be denied, to the seeking soul. His faith is only second-hand who has not sought for himself what truth is. His religion is a poor affair if it has been accepted only as a matter of tradition and authority, as merely the correct thing for the society in which he moves. It is this unintelligent, unspiritual acceptance of beliefs that have come down to us enforced by the weight of the pious tradition of centuries that makes a large part of that which passes for religion so terribly insincere. And in a time of advancing thought there is ever a tendency on the part of the otiose or the preoccupied to let others do their thinking for them ; to accept as of faith all that is presented with authority. For fear of believing too little, they are ready to believe too much. Having renounced the duty of private judgment they swallow wholesale the dogmas of

current theology. Unmindful of the warning that "credulity is as real, if not so great, a sin as unbelief," they fall a prey to the bigotry of the ecclesiastic, and their very faith, because it has in them no sure foundation, becomes an unfaith which shrinks from the investigation of religious problems as though all such investigation were profane. It was all very well for Newman to deny the right of private judgment; but any one who reads the *Apologia pro Vita sua* will discover what a vast amount of private judgment was necessary before he could convince himself of the authority of the Church of Rome. He walked into credulity with his eyes open, for fear of being damned for believing too little.

And yet it remains to be true that the individual soul is, and must necessarily be, the arbiter for itself of what it accepts in religion. There is no other arbitrament of what it is right for a man to believe than that of his inmost conviction of soul; his own private judgment. No other, because he who thinks to renounce his right by embracing in block the dogmas of any particular Church or sect, exercises that very right in the act of renouncing it. If any particular Church presents itself as claiming the right to dictate religious beliefs to the soul, on the ground that it is the special and exclusive custodian of truth, then one cannot possibly accept the claim which it advances without first satisfying one's self as to the evidence on which its pretensions are based; and the examination of those claims, or pretensions, to see if they are historically true or morally justified, is itself an exercise of private judgment. There is no infallible Church, there is no infallible priest, there is no infallible book. Truth must

be sought elsewhere than in any presumed or traditional external infallibility. No honest seeker after truth will renounce his right and duty of search, simply because of a pious hope, or a friendly assertion, that in some book, or Church, or priest, he may find an infallible guide. In other words, however many good and pious souls may cherish the belief that they have found an infallible external guide, the duty of choice, of search still lies upon the individual soul.

The Greek verb *αἰρέω* means "I choose." The Greek word for "choice" is *αἵρεσις*, or, in its English form, "heresy." We find Paul using the verb in the Epistle to the Philippians (i. 22) in the passage: "Yet what I shall choose I wot not" (*καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω*). The noun *αἵρεσις* we find in the Acts of the Apostles in six passages, in five of which it is translated "sect," in one "heresy." Sadducees, Pharisees, Nazarenes, Christians are in turn each described as a "heresy." After all, a heretic is one who determines to choose the religious belief that he will hold, instead of delegating that choice to a priest. Every independent view of truth, every fresh revelation of God to man, when first announced, is a "heresy" in the eyes of the orthodox religionists of the day. It has always been so and will continue to be.

The Greek verb *σκέπτομαι*, which does not occur in the New Testament, means I look about carefully, I examine, I shade my eyes for better vision, I consider. The English noun "sceptic," which is derived from it, means, therefore, one who considers or examines, or looks about carefully. Instead of being a term of discredit, it ought to be

regarded as a term of honour for those who, like the Berœans, were more noble than the men in Thessalonika, "because they sought diligently whether those things were so."

There are no terms that have been more freely or more frequently hurled at the heads of seekers after truth than "heretic" and "sceptic." But, as we see, every one who does not ignobly renounce his soul's right of choice in favour of a second-hand religion, is necessarily both sceptic and heretic. Obedient to the inner impulse in his soul he searches and considers, and having sought and considered he chooses. The choice may not be complete all at once—it seldom is. The transition from darkness to light is a process usually accomplished in stages. Light appears in one part, then in another, as the day of truth dawns. And the choice may be quite definite and simple and clear respecting a few things, while as respects others the decision is yet held, nobly and reverentially held, in suspense. Suspense of judgment on many controverted points is often a sacred duty: the only honest course when neither belief nor disbelief would be right. The depth of faith consists not in believing many things, but in holding, believing, knowing of first-hand knowledge by immediate revelation in the soul, a few things very strongly. Even in spiritual matters a man's life consisteth not in the abundance that he possesseth.

In the mistaken effort to acquire a full-blown orthodox faith, how many good Christians have filled up their creeds with things that they only half believed, or fancied that they believed, while really having no particular convictions on the subject. So

they accept at second hand, as an integral part of their religious beliefs, all the cumbrous and elaborate dogmas and formularies which the pious of past centuries have constructed, thinking thereby to honour God. And this is the history of the Christian Creeds. From the first simple confession of apostolic times : " I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God " (as in the attributed verse 37 of Acts viii.), or " I confess Jesus as Lord, and believe in my heart that God raised Him from the dead " (as in Rom. x. 9), the devout have with intrusive piety piled up article on article, and clause on clause, until the official creeds of the Churches, whether emanating from Nicæa or from Chalcedon, from Geneva or Westminster, are crumbling under the load of successive accretions, and have become all alike impossible even to the most reverential of sincere seekers after truth. Accept every clause of our creed or be cast out as a heretic who follows not Us, cry the orthodox of each denomination. And so he that is " too clear of soul to unthink a thought, or to falsify the truth," must withdraw with an aching heart from the fellowship of his kind, and go into the desert alone.

And yet alone he is not. A Divine Presence goes with him. For there is no greater truth than that of the Divine Immanence in the soul of man. That God will indeed dwell with men on the earth ; that to the humble and contrite heart He makes Himself known ; that He has never left Himself without witness ; that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him ; that to him that ordereth his conduct in life aright He will show the salvation of God ; that

to the pure in heart He reveals Himself: all this remains outside the orthodox creeds. This great fact of the immediate and interior revelation of God to the soul, the vision of the Unseen and the Eternal, is the essence of all real religion. Not that an imperfect and fallible human soul may not make mistakes as to the revelation given to it. There is no infallibility here any more than elsewhere. Only by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, by comparing one revelation with another, can certainty, even in measure, be reached. But the essential fact lies here: that what a man has himself experienced in his own innermost being is for ever a part of himself, and in its hold over him and over his actions and thoughts, unconscious as well as conscious, it transcends anything that has come to him only at second hand. His own personal experience is to him far more real than any outward fact; the inner voice he has heard more potent than any outward proclamation. Amid all the conflicting and discordant voices around him, amid all the distracting sensations of the hour, to him there is ever present the ineffaceable consciousness: "I have felt." One such genuine inner spiritual experience outweighs ten thousandfold in the problems of life and conduct the acceptance of any formal creed. Imperfect, limited though it be, that is a man's religion which, whether he have deliberately chosen it or no, is thus his own.

What sort of religion would we, being free to choose, select as a rule of life, a guide to conduct, a working faith? The question sounds a little hollow thus repeated after the statement of the supreme fact of human consciousness, that the

Spirit of the Eternal, entering into a human soul, works in it with an overpowering conviction. That fact would seem to involve an inversion of choice : that it is God who chooses us, not we who choose God. And yet while that also is in its own way true, intensely true, there is still a sense in which the choice remains with us. There is amongst the laws of the spiritual world—laws which we could detect by observation even if we had not had them shown us otherwise—this: that we must ask in order to receive, must seek if we would find. Apparently it is a condition in our freedom of choice, that inertia in spiritual things defeats itself. We referred at the outset of this chapter to the obvious circumstance that to the majority of those who make choice of a religion, the choice is made, apparently, under the stress of emotional rather than of intellectual forces. And yet in many cases, probably in almost all, could we but know them, before the emotional occasion came which provoked the apparent choice, there has been, sometimes for years, a spiritual struggle for light, a groping for truth, a balancing of thought, a direction of the mind and aspirations toward the problems of religion, directed, it may have been, to the conflicting claims of sects or the warfare of rival creeds, perhaps to the ever-recurring struggle to overcome the lower nature, perhaps to the future of mankind and the destiny of the world, so that when the crisis comes at some parting of the ways the thinking out of the bearings of the question had already been more or less formally accomplished. He who seeks finds ; but seldom does the finding come when it is exactly expected. More often it comes when least expected, as in a flood of light

making obvious that which before was obscure. And the crisis is more often marked by an emotional event than by the attainment of any logical conclusion; it involves logical conclusions, but their acceptance had awaited the spiritual impulse. The very word "crisis" suggests a situation requiring judgment, choice, decision. The decision may under stress of emotion be hurried, before the judgment is ripe, before consideration is mature. Who can say that in his own case it was not so? Who can say that it was not therefore a duty to revise and correct religious beliefs as occasion shall arise, and truth becomes more clearly seen? Those whose eyes are newly opened may "see men as trees walking," and need a spiritual education to interpret their impressions. The religion of childhood is often very real, very touching: but it is not the final stage of belief. Because we learn to think of God more truly than we thought of Him in childhood, that does not change Him, or make us worship a different God. If our thoughts of Him were not different from those of the ancient Hebrews in the childhood of the race, they would be unworthy both of Him and of ourselves. It is all very well for pious souls to sing: "the Old-time Religion is good enough for me." It is good enough, rightly understood. But what do the words mean? Remember that Jesus Christ was not a Christian, but a Jew: that the only times He mentioned "salvation" were when He declared that salvation had come to the house of Zacchæus because he too was a son of Abraham, and when He told the woman of Samaria that salvation is of the Jews. Will any one dare to say that the religion

that was good enough for Jesus Christ is not good enough for him? And yet we should all agree that in the good providence of God men in the twentieth century enjoy a higher, a purer, a fuller revelation of the Divine Nature than was ever enjoyed by that Jewish nation into which Christ was born? Even now we are but beginning to understand the real Christ, so overlaid has the presentation of Him been by the traditions of pious men and the heavy hand of the theologians. The selfish sort of religion that dominates most of Protestantism, and writes up "Save your soul" over the doors of its chapels, has need to be shaken from its conceit by pointing out that what Jesus said would be more accurately represented if one were to write it "Lose your soul." The Greek word *ψυχή*, which occurs over eighty times in the New Testament, is translated as *soul* in rather more than half, and as *life* in nearly half of these passages. What Jesus said was therefore this (Mark viii. 35) : "Whosoever will save his soul shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his soul for the sake of Me and of the good tidings, the same shall preserve it." Again we have to remember that all the modern Protestant notions about the Atonement, whether of the Calvinistic or the Arminian variety, were utterly unknown to the primitive Church in apostolic times. In that marvellous expansion of the primitive Church from the upper chamber in Jerusalem, until it flowed over most of the Roman Empire—a spreading of the Gospel that in energy or passionate devotion has never been equalled in after ages,—the Gospel that was preached was not the Protestant Gospel of the Atonement at all, but a Gospel of the

Resurrection. No one by reading any of the three recognised creeds of orthodox Christendom would ever gather that God is Love : the doctrine that God is a God of love is never mentioned in the Creeds. As another example of the way in which the traditions of the Middle Ages have fettered themselves upon us, it is enough to recall in the so-called Athanasian Creed, and less distinctly in the Nicene Creed, the clauses which relate to the "Three Persons." Now this phrase is a mistranslation. The Greek word used is *ὑπόστασις* or in Latinised form *Hypostasis*. It is the same word which occurs in Hebrews xi. 1, where it is declared that faith is the hypostasis of things hoped for, or "substance" of things hoped for. To translate this word by "person" would make nonsense of the sentence. A nearer idea of its meaning is conveyed if we translate it as "manifestation." It is, literally, that which "stands under" or "subsists in." Three "manifestations" or three "presentations" is nearer to the meaning than three persons. And while the Athanasian Creed insists on three hypostases or persons, who must not be confounded together, the extraordinary fact remains that an early Council of the Church pronounced a solemn anathema on those who should profess that the Son of God was a different hypostasis (or person) from the Father ! From all this hopeless embittered tangle of metaphysical terms which sound so much and have, for us at least, so little meaning, and from the endless mental contradictions which they involve, the seeker after truth turns sadly away. Not here in these hair-splitting definitions does he find a Gospel of life unto life. Neither have the distinctions drawn

by the theologians between the historical Christ of the Gospels, and the metaphysical Christ of the Creeds, any attractions for him. One who is neither Tritheist nor Unitarian cares not greatly for all this war of words, this logic-chopping, this dogmatising. Let us leave it all, and get on to the real religious problem of the twentieth century : how to lift up the sons of men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

In truth we need sorely a new Protestantism to deliver us alike from the formalisms of the old, from the worship of mammon and of material might, and from the ever-recurring efforts of the old ecclesiastical domination to re-establish its sway. The religion we seek must be one that binds the human soul to God, and human souls to one another in a Divine fellowship, without the intervention of any priest or priestly order of men. The mummeries and magical efficacy of the sacraments, the repetition of formal creeds which have become mostly meaningless, the claims of a priesthood to pronounce absolution and remission of sin, all these things must go. They are sheer stumbling-blocks in the way of the sincere seeker after truth.

What sort of a religion, then, remains to us ? Surely there can be no doubt as to the answer. We have before us the figure of the Divine Master Jesus Christ, moving amongst men as a man, going about doing good, healing the sick and the oppressed, rejoicing with those that rejoiced, weeping with those that wept, giving His whole life for the deliverance of the many, revealing in His own person the character of the Father, manifesting forth Divine love, obedient even unto death, putting

away sinning by self-sacrifice. In the life and work of Jesus Christ we have, if we may reverently so express it, a working model of a human life, a perfect example of what a human life may be. The perfect obedience to the Divine will, the complete absorption into the Divine Life, the entire devotion to the service of man, revealed in the character of Jesus ; that is a revelation which has never been surpassed : so that in spite of all the dogmas and all the rituals with which theologians and ecclesiastics have overlaid it, we can still see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He who has caught a glimpse of that face, who has heard but the echo of that voice cannot choose but follow whither He leads. He needs no "proof" of Christ's divinity to whom Christ thus reveals Himself in His Divine radiance.

"The very God ! think Abib ! dost thou think ?
 So the All-Great were the All-Loving too ;
 So through the thunder comes the human voice
 Saying ' Oh heart I made, a heart beats here !
 Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself !
 Thou hast no power, nor mayst conceive of Mine
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love
 And thou must love Me who have died for thee ! ' "

But in choosing as a religion the following of Christ it is necessary to avoid not only the error which presents Him as the head of a great hierarchical organisation governed by bishops enthroned in their sees and priests sacrificing at their thousand altars, but also that other error in which the following of Him is presented as a withdrawal from the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, a renunciation of the joys of life and of family ties, a denial of the intellectual forces of our being involving an

abandonment of the refinements of art, literature, music, and even of the progress of science. The day in which the ascetic isolation of hermits and the separation of monks and nuns from contact with the world was deemed the highest phase of Christian devotion is indeed past : but in place we have, and in particular amongst the most earnest Protestant sects, an equally warped conception of the Christian life as something to which intellectual development is antagonistic, and which treats science as irreligious. Let us not make any mistake on this point. Renunciation and self-denial are as necessary as ever to him who would follow the Christ. But what is it that we are to renounce ? In what way is it that we are called upon to deny ourselves ? Any renunciation made merely because it is a renunciation, any self-denial made merely as a self-denial, defeats itself, because neither renunciation nor self-denial is an end in itself. Self-denial for its own sake is not pleasing to God, any more than self-torture or self-mutilation, or any other voluntary humiliation. But renunciation of self, of place, of interest, of gain, of leisure, of ease, of luxury, of knowledge, even, when called for by the needs of others, denial of the self and of any gain to self that would injuriously affect others, self-denial not for the sake of self-denial but solely for the aid of others, that is the spirit of Christ's teaching. The word "renounce" bears two meanings that are somewhat different from one another, and the distinction is not always easy to define. In the German language there are two verbs, both of which mean to renounce—*entbehren* and *entsagen*,—and the distinction between them illustrates the point. *Entbehren* means

to deprive one's self of something, *entsagen* to leave aside something, as, for example, to abdicate the throne. In Goethe's great drama Mephistopheles exclaims to Faust :

*Entbehren sollst du ?
Sollst entbehren.*

And the mocking fiend has assuredly in his view no Christian renunciation. *Entsagung* in its application to the Christian life rather implies self-limitation, an abstaining in the interest of others from the things otherwise good and right, a renunciation in favour of others. In helping others as we go about the world there is much room for exercise of *Entsagung*, much more than for *Entbeh-rung*. The self-denial we are most called upon to practice is not the denying ourselves of something, but literally the renunciation of the self. The lower nature that puts *self* forward as the object and aim in life must be put down. It is the needs of others, the sorrows of others, the joys of others, the souls of others, that must claim our energies, not our own needs, nor our own joys, nor our own sorrows, nor even the saving of our own souls. We must be willing to lose our own souls if we would save them. Many times in a man's life—and perhaps even more often in the life of a woman—the exercise of this renunciation of the self may be called for. One may find one's interest in one or other department of human activity enlarging ; and the claims of efforts, good and right in themselves, crowd in upon one in a way unwholesome to the spiritual health, consuming time, leading to hurry and impatience, interfering with that which

the soul feels to be its truest aim and purpose. A man who lives in this stress of activities cannot bring out the best in him, cannot give his life to its truest work unless he is willing to limit himself in some directions that he may not squander his opportunities for usefulness. Openings toward a career of greater prominence in his profession, toward an increase of his business, toward the procuring of a greater income or toward a position of apparently greater public influence and usefulness, come from time to time ; and feeling that there is a limit to human activity and strength, he must pause and consider, and pray for guidance, and be willing to desist, if so be that he find on reflection that the acceptance of the greater responsibility will be likely to warp him from the line of simple service in which his first duty lies. He must be willing to become, in the eyes of men, a fool for Christ's sake. This is as truly a denial of self as any formal self-denial of luxury or increase of subscriptions to charitable funds. A passage from the *Imitatio Christi* seems apposite to the duty thus conceived :—

“ If thou seek this or that, and wouldest be here or there the better to enjoy thine own profit or pleasure, thou shalt never be at peace nor free from trouble of mind. And this thou must understand, not only of revenues and wealth, but of seeking after honour also, and of the desire of vain praise, which all must pass away with this world.”

And so this limitation of self, in order that the truer self that lives for others may have expansion and development, becomes a Christian duty ; and the taking up of the cross is found not in any voluntary humiliation or great overt renunciation

of the world, but in the right choosing of the duties of the day. Doing one's simple duty in accordance with the spirit of obedience and self-sacrifice, willing to become not only fools but heretics for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. Ah ! if in all this we could have Christ's own mind !

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus " is an excellent rule of conduct. But it is more ; for the mind of Christ, the mildness and sweet reasonableness that dwelt in Him is a touchstone of character as well as of conduct. And in choosing a religion we are choosing an ideal of character. Would that that ideal set before us in the character of Christ were more nearly to be attained by us all !

There is left but little space to touch upon the last branch of this enquiry—the choice of a community or fellowship, in which a religion of life, such as has been outlined, may be best nurtured. Fellowship we must have in our spiritual pilgrimage, for however true it be that a man's religion is a purely individual affair between his own soul and his Maker, it is yet good that in this world he should not walk alone.

In the choice of a religious community, with which to unite for mutual support and counsel, one thing we must frankly recognise, that whatever ideal we may predicate of any community, however spiritual or enlightened its aims and aspirations, none will come up to that ideal. The imperfections of human nature, always present even in the most saintly community, preclude the full realisation of the ideal.

The religious community that will afford in this

our modern life the most appropriate home for the honest seeker after truth, to whom the mediæval traditions of the current and traditional "Christianity," that has so greatly departed from the thoughts and ways of Christ, have become for ever impossible, must be one that, while it gives the fullest scope for the true spiritual emotions and aspirations of the Christian life, shall not offend his conscience nor bind on him a yoke that neither he nor his fathers were able to bear. It must not stifle his worship in ceremonial; it must not exact subscription to the traditional creeds in which his grandparents were suckled; it must not in proud isolation treat those who are doing the Master's work of casting out the devils of impurity, intemperance, insincerity, and ignorance with contumely, nor cast them out on the plea that they follow not US. Above all it must be animated with the spirit of the Master in its interpretation of the duties of man to man. A sad example of the way in which the nominal Churches of Christ have left behind them the gentle spirit of Jesus, and His commands as to conduct of man toward man, was afforded during the late South African war, when it was left to heretics and sceptics, to the outcasts of orthodoxy, to Agnostics, Positivists, Unitarians, Quakers, and Freethinkers, to protest against that barbaric defiance of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. War between nations must go, as duelling and slavery have gone, from the things possible to any nation professing to follow Christ.

In the ideal Christian community Christianity will not be swamped in a mediæval Christology. The new Protestantism will set forth a religion of

life and conduct inspired by the spirit of Christ from within, leaving little room for any waste of energies upon the metaphysics of the school man or the traditions of antiquity. Why dispute about a legendary fall when the sad scenes of human degradation, and the bitter consciousness of proneness to sin, are patent facts in our own lives? Why try to force belief in a miraculous birth which, if believed in, robs the humanity of Jesus of half its force, when it is recognised that a revelation of the wholly Divine may be immanent in one who was also in His nature wholly human? Why quarrel about miracles when every day, if we have eyes to see, we may observe the spirit of God working miracles not on the winds and waves, but on the lives of men and women redeemed from the degradation of sin, and renewed in the spirit of their minds through the love that Christ bore to them? Why build upon the crime of murder—murder of the divinest Being that ever walked this earth—a scheme of redemption repellant to the purest conception of the Fatherhood of God? The pure religion of Jesus must not be trammelled by insistence upon the pious thoughts of the ecclesiastics, whether of the seventeenth century, or of the fourth, or even of the second. For all these man-made schemes and theories are destined to melt away into nothingness. When the cloud that has descended upon the ages shall have lifted, we shall see no man upon the Mount save Jesus only; and the light of life that emanates from Him in this transfiguration will illuminate our souls with a personal religion needing not to be based on a legendary fall, a miraculous birth, a fearful murder, or an empty

tomb. Christ remains to His faithful followers an endless and priceless possession, a true light lighting every man. So then the follower of Christ who has been willing to leave the nearest and dearest, to renounce himself and to become a partaker in His suffering, becomes a sharer, too, in His transfiguration. He will know in his own experience that new birth to righteousness, in which, under the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, he has become a new creature, from whom the old things have passed away. He will have put to death the old sinful nature, and have risen with Christ into newness of life. He will have learned in a new and joyful sense how fellowship in the Kingdom of Heaven binds him by ties of sacred love and duty to all his fellow creatures. He will have found in the community of those whose hearts are thus illuminated and guided by the spirit of Jesus, by whatever denomination they may be called, a true communion of faith, a Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

CHAPTER XII

Life and Creed

"O Lord and Master of us all !
Whate'er our creed or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

"We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray ;
But dim and clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way !

"Not Thine the bigot's partial plea,
Nor Thine the zealot's ban ;
Thou well canst spare a love of Thee
Which ends in hate of man.

"To do Thy will is more than praise,
As words are more than deeds,
And simple trust can find Thy ways
We miss with chart of creeds."

WHITTIER.

HOW unimportant, relatively, is the creed, that is to say the formulated theory of belief, which a man holds, is demonstrated by the undeniable fact that in every Christian community, orthodox or unorthodox, be its creed full or scanty, be its confession of faith Catholic, Evangelical, or Unitarian, there have been, and are still to be found, men and women of Christlike spirit and saintly walk, whose whole

existence is a witness to the Divine life living and moving in them.

No two men's creeds ever are the same, nor ought they to be. What a man believes, depends not only on what he has been taught, but on his ancestral heritage, on his frame and furniture of mind, on his susceptibility to religious emotions, on the experiences of his life. And as we come of different ancestries, have intellects differently developed, have had different experiences, and are of differing susceptibilities, we necessarily, even if our religious education were the same, should differ in the theoretical views we hold of religious truth. Even if we should agree to formulate our beliefs in identical terms, the words would not convey the same intent to different minds.¹ We cannot compel words to convey the same identical meaning to every mind: that fact of itself demonstrates the absurdity of requiring the submission of all to any verbal document called a creed. Any one who has studied the controversies of the third and fourth centuries about the nature of Christ, and one Council pronounced anathema on those who should declare Christ to be a different person from God the Father, and how another pronounced anathema on those who should declare Christ to be the same person as God the Father, must know how futile was the controversy, since the very term "person"—*hypostasis*—

¹ For example: the words "He descended into hell," would convey very different meanings to Dr. W. S. Lilly and to General Bramwell Booth. Again, how different would be the implications conveyed by the words, "Maker of heaven and earth" to a devout geologist such as the Rev. Canon Bonney, or to a devout astronomer such as the late Sir William Huggins, from those which they would convey to a person such as the late Father Tabb, who spoke of the earth as a toy ball for the infant Jesus to play with!

was not itself defined. In fact, the whole of the devastating struggles between Arians and Athanasians, Sabellians and Patripassians, were veritable battles of words. The damnation which on every saint's day the English Church pronounces on those who divide the "substance" or confound the "persons" of the Trinity, is a perfectly childish conjuration, of no more avail than the curse pronounced on the jackdaw of Rheims. Those who regard the *Quicumque Vult* as a bulwark of faith have neither the saving knowledge of etymology to deliver them from their ignorance, nor the sense of humour to perceive the futility of the whole affair. They have not yet learned that a creed is of use only as marking historically a stage—it may be a curious and interesting stage—in the evolution of religious ideas; a milestone, as it were, in religious progress. But a milestone removed from its proper place is useless, nay misleading; and a fourth-century creed, if transported into the twentieth century, is equally out of place, and is misleading unless one can make every one who recites it understand its terms as they were understood in the fourth century. "A creed that is more than a milestone is a blunder." Human nature produced the historic creeds. They grew up as trees and flowers grew out of mother earth, adapted to soil and environment. To impose on the Western modern mind, in an age of scientific enlightenment, the primitive beliefs and mythologies of an Oriental folk, as though they were the corner-stones of unchangeable verity, is an outrage on the spirit of truth, and an insult to the soul of man. On the other hand, the preachers of to-day have no right to

read modern ideas into the ancient verbiages which they find in Hebrew literature. I have heard a preacher maintaining that the fourth-century orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in the book of Genesis on the ground that he found therein the passage (chap. i. 26) in the plural number: "let *us*" [the Elohim] "make man in *our* image." Such anachronisms do but bring ridicule on the pulpit. But the matter goes much deeper, as an illustration will show. A few years ago the celebrated painter, M. James Tissot, previously known for his pictures of life on the Parisian boulevards, experienced a revulsion in his art, and departed to Palestine, where he spent the remainder of his days in elaborating a wonderful series of paintings and drawings illustrative of the life of Christ, depicted with the utmost fidelity to Oriental scenes and surroundings. No one can question his sincerity or his competence. But neither sincerity nor competence in art availed to prevent the painter from depicting in his scenes yuccas and prickly pears and other plants of American origin, which Christ and His disciples never saw, though they abound in Syria to-day. Which thing is an allegory. The orthodox creeds of Western Europe, which are so often presented to us as being the religion of Christ and His Apostles, are human products containing elements foreign to the teaching of Christ and of later origin. Our commentators and expositors fall into the same error when they read into the New Testament the dogmas invented by the Fathers or by the Councils: they too plant the scene of the Gospels with alien growths. The scene so painted may be scrupulously accurate, as reviewed by the

observer who has been nurtured in dogmatic surroundings ; but its essential falsity becomes obvious when once the anachronism has been pointed out. Does any one know what Christ meant when He told His disciples "to take up their cross daily" ? To pretend that the phrase had any relation to His own subsequent crucifixion is to implant a later and alien idea. Many indeed are the phrases into which we habitually and unconsciously read modern ideas. I have heard a preacher argue that the use of the magnetic needle was known in St. Paul's time because of the statement in the Authorized Version, Acts xxviii. 13, that the voyagers "fetched a compass" from Syracuse and came to Rhegium. Little did the compilers of the creeds in the third and fourth centuries realise how their mistaken zeal for what they deemed the truth of God would, fifteen centuries later, be the undoing of the Churches. They sought to defend and fortify the truth of God by erecting buttresses and bastions that seemed to them impregnable, but which to-day disfigure and distort and conceal the truth they were intended to support. To-day there are men profoundly imbued with the spirit of Christ, who nevertheless stoutly reject "Christianity," repelled from it because the orthodox creeds of the Church contain impossible clauses which the Churchmen are too blind to abandon.

Some day when the historian shall write the narrative of the passing of the creeds, the era of the emancipation of the soul from theological bondage, he will have a singular and varied material upon which to work. Before they have passed into oblivion the assiduous creed-collector will have

amassed a series of specimens for reference in future ages. In his museum of creeds outworn he will be able to study their origin, their evolution, their spread, their successive dominance, their decay. He will trace with keen interest the primitive simplicity of some ; the complicated and delicate structures of others ; the quaint excrescences which have been developed in others ; the disappearance from some of features which had ceased to subserve any useful function ; the traditions which were circulated about their origin ; the attempts at forcible suppression which render some specimens rare ; the contradictions which are found between the creeds of one generation and those of the next ; the fierce and inexplicable rivalries arising out of trivial differences. To him it will be a matter of sheer bewilderment how for more than a whole millennium three great creeds could have been regarded as orthodox, each one of which is silent as to the supreme truth that God is love. He will have learned, too, in the age that has outgrown the creeds, how fatuous was the thought that truth could ever be confined within the mere form of language ; as though words did not change their meaning and were not subject, as all human things are, to inexorable change and decay. Without having first defined the terms they employ, men frame philosophies of words, and imagine those philosophies to be real and true. Then they proceed to deny that they can be presented in any other way than that set forth in the framework which they have created. Ask them for their definitions, and they deduce them from the framework. Verily, he who seeks truth of such comes out by the same door as in he went. The

"shadow cloaked from head to foot who keeps the key of all the creeds" sits in the twilight of metaphysics, where no vision is, and the people perish.

What effect, then, on life and conduct can the mere holding¹ of a creed produce? At the best it can only effect that which could be equally well effected without it in him who has laid hold on the things that really matter. At the worst it leads into the false position of thinking and acting as though the words only mattered, and the things behind them were unimportant. Correct belief as a substitute for right conduct has been the curse of all creed-bound religions. Whenever and wherever men of pure and noble life have been persecuted or put to death for incorrect beliefs—and there is no Church existing which can say "I am clean" from the stain of heresy-hunting—the cause of true religion has suffered. No persecutor has any right to claim that he is animated by the spirit of Jesus: his acts contradict his profession.

All religion which fails to produce rectification of conduct and elevation of character in the man who professes it, must stand condemned. Its right to be deemed a true religion fails if it bears no fruit. That is a matter too often forgotten by the zealots who strive to proselytise and to "convert." How sadly do they wrench from their true import the words of Christ "except ye be converted"! What repentance and conversion really mean has been discussed elsewhere. In the present connexion, in relation to life and creed, it is plain that the phrase to "be converted" does not

¹ There is here no suggestion of the hypocritical holding of a creed by one whose profession is a deliberate pretence.

mean to "change your creed," but to "transform your life;" for change of creed in itself is of minor moment, being at best a means to an end, while the transformation of life is vital—an end in itself. The word *conversion*, by its association with the dogmatism of a particular school has lost its primitive force, and has acquired instead a narrow technical meaning. The word *transformation* much more nearly conveys in modern English the sense of the original ἐπιστροφή; for the turning-round, which is the etymological meaning of that word, implies a change of the whole motives of action. What a gain it would be if ardent evangelists would drop the misused term, and substitute the more appropriate! It was transformation of life, not change of belief, that Jesus strove to bring about by His mission; for in creed He remained to the end a Jew. When a man of evil life is converted, the change that takes place in him is a transformation not of his theories but of himself. His actions, his words, his attitude to others, his whole outlook on life are changed, because the motives of conduct within him have undergone a transformation, ennobling his nature, and purifying his will.

As with the misunderstood word *conversion* so with the misused word *salvation*. "Have you got salvation?" asks the revivalist preacher, as though "salvation" were a commodity that might be obtained from the neighbouring store. It is not to the word itself but to the implications which have been put upon it that exception can be taken. "Are you saved?" is really the wrong question to be put; it should rather be: "Are you being saved?" Are you being kept safe from your

worser self? from selfishness? from the sins of omission and commission to which your conscience tells you you are prone? Are you being lifted up, not simply out of the grosser sins, but out of the besetments of the entire lower nature? Are the ape and tiger in you dying? Are you being lifted out of meanness, hasty temper, envy of others, greed, petty spite? out of apathy towards the suffering and the weak? Has life become for you a holy thing? If not, what is your salvation worth? Is your life being transformed, are your aims being purified, is your character being elevated? That is the real question. To be saved from endless tortures in a hell of fire is all very well if you believe in that sort of thing. But if the salvation you have "got" does not save you from a hell of selfishness in this life, how can it avert eternal damnation? Nay, the fear of eternal damnation preached by ignorant mediæval monks has obscured the real issue. Realise, once for all, that the assignment to eternal torture of any single erring human soul is impossible at the hands of a loving All-Father—otherwise He would be neither All-Good nor All-Merciful—and you will begin to see that the salvation which the Gospel of Christ offers is not that you may be saved from an imaginary fate in a fiery hell which does not exist, but that you may be saved now and in this life from your worser self, and from the evils that beset your soul day by day. Are you in that sense being saved? Have you turned to follow Christ down the lonely road of self-renunciation? Are you still seeking your own advancement, or are you devoting your energies to help your fellow-men? Are you trying to remove

the stumbling-blocks that beset their lives? Are you helping lame dogs over stiles? Are you dealing justly, showing mercy, walking humbly? Are you spending yourself for the poor, tending the sick, assisting the fatherless, comforting the sorrowful, clothing the destitute, teaching the ignorant, taking your share in bearing the burdens of your fellows? If not, what is your religion worth? You may have subscribed to all the creeds and articles of faith; but for all that your religion is vain. Not words, but actions, not creeds, but deeds, were declared by Jesus to avail for admission to the heavenly state. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall inherit the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." The theologians may lay down what dogmas they please, but they cannot efface the teaching of Christ Himself. In the necessary regeneration of life there is an element which transcends all the theologies in its effectual working on the instincts, purposes, motives, and perceptions of the human soul, the inner life of the Spirit renewing the whole nature and lifting it up towards the Divine. Truly the life of the Spirit is a vastly greater thing than the words in which it may be formulated, even as the body is more than the raiment. "Verily," said the author of the *De Imitatione* (chap. i. 3), "Verily, when the day of judgment comes, we shall be asked not what we have read, but what we have done; not how well we have spoken, but how we have lived."

If it be objected that in the foregoing paragraphs the strictures on the theologians have been too severe, let it be pointed out that the ecclesiastical

temper ever is, and ever has been, to lay stress on creed rather than on conduct, and herein to run counter to the words of the Scriptures which the Churches profess to uphold. Salvation by creed and obedience to the authority that frames the creeds is the note of the Ultramontane. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. But salvation by creed is a doctrine which is proclaimed widely both by Protestants and by many others who would repudiate any taint of Protestantism. "That we are justified *by faith only* is a most wholesome doctrine," says Article XI. of the Anglican Church. Not so spoke the Christ.

It is, of course, admitted that the quotation of an isolated text of Scripture, apart from its context, proves nothing. But when a whole series of texts from different parts of the Bible all enforce the same teaching, the inference is irresistible that this is a definite part of the Divine ordering of things, no matter what any Church or Council may have decreed. This is the case with the teaching under consideration. In Psalm lxii. 12 we read: "And Thou renderest to every man according to his work." In Matt. xvi. 27 we are told by Christ: "And then He shall reward every man according to his works." The Greek word in Matthew is *κατὰ τὴν πράξιν αὐτοῦ*—*according to his practice*, his habitual works, the deeds done in this life. In the Epistle of James ii. 24 it stands emphatically, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." And in Revelation xxii. 12 the award is, "To give every man according as his work shall be." The "wholesome doctrine" of Article XI. of the Anglican Church is false, monstrously false and misleading. An evil hour

was it when the Church rejected the teaching of Christ, and put the regeneration of life on a lower level as of lesser virtue than conformity of belief. St. Paul's doctrine of the "new creature" presents Christ's teaching in another phase, but it is in essence the same. If he could say that in Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, how much more cogently may we urge, as essentially Pauline, that in Christ neither Trinitarianism nor Unitarianism availeth anything, but only the regeneration of life? Matthew Arnold, anticipating the evil consequences of political quarrels that stain religious life in England, could deplore the day when the counsels of the great apostle shall be forgotten; "when the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Christ, as a power to work the annulment of our ordinary self, will be clean disregarded and out of mind." How much more may we deprecate the prevalence of the great and disastrous heresy that salvation comes by creed! The obvious fact is that, in the realities of practical religion, creed simply does not count. You may be Arian or Athanasian, Calvinist or Socinian, or all in turns, or none, and yet be a Christ follower in spite of your creed. The question is not what theory do you hold, but this: Are you filled with the spirit of Jesus; are you living to Him and doing God's will on the earth; are you devoting yourself, as He did, and for His sake, to the service of man?

I know an aged watchmaker, one of the very salt of the earth, who in his enfeebled retirement finds scope for a singularly helpful round of quiet and unobtrusive service of God; who has in innumerable ways aided his less fortunate brothers and

sisters, the needy and stricken ones ; whose silent deeds of kindness and sympathy no living soul knows. Whether he be nominally Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Unitarian, I know not ; yet he is full of the spirit of Christ, and his saintly life is a rebuke to the self-seeker and to the profane. Here is a religion¹ indeed, and one without show, or pretence, or self-advertisement. I have never asked him what his creed is. Possibly he himself does not know.

Face to face with the fact of holy living and holy dying we must abandon the superstition of the efficacy of creeds. The biographer of the Jew Spinoza, his adversary in matters theological, but one not blinded by theological differences to the essential sublimity of his life, was constrained thus to conclude his narration : " Blessed be thou, great yea holy Benedictus, notwithstanding thy vagaries in thought and word when philosophising on the nature of the Most High ! His truth was in thy soul ; His love was in thy life."

¹ By way of contrast, consider the well-attested story of Lord Melbourne, who is reported to have remarked after hearing a sermon : " No one has a greater respect than myself for the Church of England, but to bring religion into private life is to go a damned sight too far."

CHAPTER XIII

The Spiritual Conflict

"Every soul of us has to do its fight with the Untoward, and for itself discover the Unseen."—RUSKIN, "*Præterita*," ii. p. 120.

IN the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the great apostle presents us with a glimpse of that stress of soul which at times overtook him, as it overtakes all strong and sincere natures, when the will was present with him, but how to perform that which is good he found not. Torn betwixt two, he found a "law" of conflict within himself: when he would do good, evil was present with him. The good that he would do, he did not; but the evil which he would not, that he did.

Nor is the internal warfare between the higher and the lower natures, or between the enlightened moral activities and the sluggishness of habit, the only kind of conflict within the soul. There comes a time when we realise with pain that we can no longer wear the armour which our fathers wore, nor wield their weapons. The pain is not merely that of the wrench involved in breaking with the hereditary past; it is a great strife of soul, when all the holy associations of youth and early faith seem to rise up against the course to which conscience

summons. Fear and horror and dismay seem to possess the soul in fierce alternation with gleams of purpose that drive hither and thither ; darkness oscillating with light, and crisis succeeding crisis, till endurance is nigh exhausted. There are hours of agony when all "the stars have set below the horizon of the soul, and a night has descended which promises no morrow." In the valley of decision, the knowledge that multitudes before us have had to pass that way makes the road no easier. Each wayfarer therein must hew his own path, and must fight the spectres of his mind—spectres which are intolerably real while the fight lasts. For oh ! the loneliness of the conflict, when never a soul takes pity on the soul in agony, and when pity itself would but kindle fierce resentment. Through the refining fire of decision must the soul pass ; to shirk the issue would be cowardice ; to turn back would be insanity ; to go forward would appear destruction. Without are fightings, within are fears. In the darkness we cry, "Would God it were morning ;" yet when day breaks a living death seems upon us, and we are still fighting at odds against forces that seem to stretch out in endless line. Invisible bonds seem to constrain us ; invisible foes seem to taunt us ; distrust and hesitation make us quail at the moment when firmest decision is required.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the birth, or rather the renascence under modern aspects, of sacred doubt. Philosophic doubt has always existed sporadically amongst individuals wherever the mass of religionists has professed an

unthinking faith. Sarcastic and irreverent doubt, flouting the fealties of faith and even the sanctities of the human heart, has never failed to show its ugly head whenever superstition has been permitted to instil itself into devotion, and ecclesiastical tradition to usurp rule over religion of the heart. But reverent doubt, doubt as a sacred duty, had never before been proclaimed as a part of religion, certainly not as a part of Christian religion. Three books may be named, each of which is in its way a characteristic product of the Victorian period of thought, the "In Memoriam," of Tennyson (1850), the "Creed of Christianity," of Mr. W. R. Greg, and "The Great Enigma," of Mr. W. S. Lilly (1892). The last-named, while it is limited by and moves wholly under the foregone preconceptions of the Roman creed, is notable alike for its reverence of tone and for its candid admissions. Tennyson's somewhat self-conscious yet devout revelations of his perplexity amongst the problems of existence, and his passionate pleading for a larger outlook, exercised immense influence at a time when ecclesiastical prejudice was excited in reaction against the advances of modern science, and it applied a much-needed relief by appealing to larger issues and truer ideals. Greg's rather tedious exposition of the decadence of old religious ideas, and of the maladies which threatened to make shipwreck of faith, failed to suggest any real remedy or to present religious belief in a more vital form; it was on the whole too negative in its tone to kindle much warmth of soul, though it remains as a valuable memorial of the age in which it was produced. But the nineteenth-century phase of thought, and the presentations

of it by Tennyson and by Greg, are passing out of the mind of the present day. No one now reading these writings will dispute their perfect sincerity, or would wilfully ignore the services they rendered. But they did not solve the problems which they stated ; or they solved them for themselves in ways other than appear patently. Nowadays we are not greatly concerned with the quarrel between geologists and Genesis, nor with that between Huxley and the bishops, nor again with the antitheses of Hellenism and Philistinism. Each age raises its own questions, formulates its own perplexities, wrestles with its own doubts. Other times, other problems. .

The age which produced sincere religious doubters of such genius as Carlyle, Emerson, Huxley, Ruskin, F. W. Newman, Greg, and Matthew Arnold, all of whom hurled themselves against the stereotyped orthodoxies of their day, is not to be lightly dismissed, though the particular matters which called forth their protests and denunciations be no longer the salient peaks of contention. To-day we are faced with other forces than those which they faced. The complacent and shallow Protestantism which aroused Matthew Arnold's ire, and the shams of pseudo-economists which Carlyle and Ruskin smote, may be still with us, but they are to-day matters of feeble concern. To-day people are more interested in the fantastics of Mr. Bernard Shaw, the topsyturveydoms of Mr. Chesterton, the sonorous cadences of Omar Khayyam, the biting aphorisms of Nietzsche, and the schoolboy bulldogisms of Mr. Kipling ; than in all the scholarly and earnest writings of the great Victorians. The conflict of religious

thought has largely passed out of the arena of public opinion, and is withdrawn into the battle-ground of the individual soul. Almost alone Sir Oliver Lodge seems to attract the public ear on questions of religious controversy, though the interest which his writings have evoked seems to be due not to his competence in criticism or philosophy, not to his eminence in experimental science, nor to his scholarship, but to his cultivation of the quasi-science of psychical research. The newer psychologists, of whom the late Professor William James was the most shining example, tickle our ears with the jargon in which they dress up the half-ascertained, half-unknown facts on the borders of our consciousness, and attract us by their skill in essaying the manufacture of an exact science out of the very elements of inexactness. One wonders in what terms the men of the next century after ours will estimate their labours. We applaud Bergson as if he were a second Plato, but we forget to ask him to define what he means by his favourite term "becoming." In all this whirr and noise of to-day, what single contribution is there that has been, or ever will be, of the smallest avail or help to the soul in conflict with itself?

When a man, stripped of an untenable creed that had indeed sheltered him as a child, finds himself, now no more a child, in conflict with himself, dragged one way by self-interest and the conventions of society, urged another way by the consciousness of duty unfulfilled towards the struggling men and women, his brothers and sisters of the human family; when he is tempted by his passions to overstep the line of perfect self-respect, or becomes conscious that some habit is growing into a vice that will hold him

mercilessly in thrall in after days ; when, from time to time, there surges up within him the conviction that he has much for which repentance and atonement are called for, that he can no longer walk with the consciousness of a clean heart or a right spirit ; or when in his better moments he finds that he must admit that envy and jealousy, or greed, or hate, are taking possession of him and hardening his nature, what course is before him ? He has eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and cannot call evil good, or good evil ; yet he seems powerless to save himself, and realises that mere knowledge will not save him ; that a mere *fides historica* is as useless to keep him in the way of righteousness as the multiplication table is to keep a spendthrift from bankruptcy. The theologian, putting his own glosses on the revelations of the things of God, propounds to him his dogmas as though they were absolute truth, and then uses them to define the things of God in terms of those dogmas. And the perplexed soul finds himself literally coming out of the same door wherein he went, the victim of the logic-mill of the dialectician. Neither can he bring himself to resort to the artifices of formal religion ; being no longer a child. He knows that the sprinkling of water in the name of the Trinity has no magical efficacy to prevent his fall. The consecrated bread which he has shared in sacred communion has availed him—how little. It never was anything but bread, despite all the incantations of the priest. He is too honest to recite a creed that he is unable to believe. He will not confess to a priest, for he has seen that a priest is only another man. He cannot bring himself to sell all he has and give it to the

poor, nor to spend himself on set deeds of benevolence to others ; for he has been assured that good works are but filthy rags, and that it is a wholesome doctrine that a man is justified by faith alone ; and faith, in the sense of belief in dogma, is the very thing that he has not. Yet he is in the very midst of intense spiritual distress. When he would do good, evil is present with him. Fires of passion, which he knows may sear his soul unless fought and vanquished, are, it may be, enfevering his heart. How shall he escape this overwhelming tide of troubles, or regain peace ? Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy, whither shall he turn ?

Consider his case. He has found out what religion is not ; that religiosity is not religion ; that church-going is not religion ; that creed-professing is not religion ; that paying subscriptions every quarter-day is not religion ; that ceremony performing is not religion ; that employing some one else to say or intone prayers for him is not religion ; that singing hymns or chanting psalms is not religion.

But has any one ever taught him what religion—the religion of Jesus Christ—really is ? Has any one ever told him that the Gospel of Jesus is, with its message of the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man ; the free forgiveness—even of prodigals—without any sacrifice and without any mediator, which God grants to those who truly repent ? Has any one expounded to him the great secret of Jesus—the law of Christ—that if any man wills to save his soul he must lose it, must renounce himself and his own aims and his own advancement, and take up the cross of suffering, and follow Christ in going

about doing good? Has any one pointed out to him that Christ's teaching was that in the great day of the crisis, the blessing of entrance upon the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom was reserved for those who exercised on earth the common duties of human beneficence, who fed the hungry, clothed the destitute, visited the sick, raised the fallen, bore one another's burdens; and that the award of the Great Judge would be to render to every man according to the habitual deeds done by him in this life? Above all, has any one shown him what manner of Person was Jesus of Nazareth, and how with supreme self-renunciation He devoted His life for the deliverance of the many, and how, having loved His own, He loved them to the end—death? Alas! that the professed teachers, instead of setting forth these things, have done their utmost to lead him into the creed-reciting, psalm-singing, subscription-paying, ceremony-mongering conventionalities, which things they blindly conceive to constitute the religion of Jesus Christ.

There are those, too, who have not become slaves of evil habit, who are not estranged from the atmosphere of religious practice, who indeed have according to their upbringing been living upright lives, who have practised the renunciation of self and the service of man, and are in the truest sense *devout*, to whom the spiritual conflict comes as a battle of beliefs; who will not purchase spiritual peace at the price of intellectual integrity. These are they to whom it comes as a persistent slow torment that they can no longer assent to the creeds that their fathers held, neither can they follow their fathers in subservience to a book, or to

a sacerdotal order, nor conform to ceremonials which their fathers deemed essential. How shall these re-enter the kingdom of joy and peace ; how regain the sacred calm of their vanished years ?

With Job they may express their yearnings in some such terms as these : " Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when His candle shined upon me, and when by His light I walked through darkness ; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, when the Almighty Himself was with me." Truly the old things have passed away, but all things have not yet become new. For such souls the spiritual conflict is the awaiting of a new vision. And the vision tarries.

To these, too, the true gospel of Jesus—stript from all the trappings and distortions of the dark ages—freed from dogma and sacerdotal tradition—comes as with the reviving breath of spring. For the really earnest yet perplexed soul, tossed with the spiritual conflict, there is no balm of healing like that afforded by a touch of the Christ ; no therapeutic equal to that of the simple practice of the Christian virtues of beneficence ; no tonic like that of trying to live the Christ life. And faith is rediscovered in the doing of the will of God.

As the vision of the Christ of Nazareth, the human Christ, dawns into fuller day, peace re-enters. Outwardly the conflict may still recur. Outwardly the man may still have to be at times as one fighting with beasts at Ephesus ; but peace wins a permanent and inward kingdom in the soul. Fighting and toil there may still be, in the earthly pilgrimage, but the pilgrim is no more cast down.

Is it not written in the pilgrim's scrip, "Without labour we are not on the way to rest, and without fighting we come not to victory" ? (*De Imitatione*, Book iii. chap. 19). And when the Master whispers : "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke xvii. 28), the touch of sympathy communicated in that intimate utterance stirs to fresh hope. If the very Christ speaks to us so, in the inner chamber of the soul, at first hand, our soul responds in willing service. This is the twentieth-century venture of faith. To believe in the immediate guidance of the Christ walking with us, with no theological pedant to misinterpret, and no "director"—to misdirect. "Come unto Me," He cries ; not, "Go to the priest ;" not, "Obey the Church ;" not "Recite this creed." And in spite of all the orthodoxies that obscure, and all the philosophies that retard, faith is reborn in the personal obedience to the personal call.

*"Whoso has felt the spirit of the Highest,
Cannot confound nor doubt Him, nor deny.
Yea with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."*

*"If I stoop,
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day."*

CHAPTER XIV

Spiritual Laws

“Religion is not philosophy but law.”—HOBBS.

ALTHOUGH in the spiritual world, as in the natural, the wind bloweth where it listeth; yet also as in the natural world, so in the spiritual, do events follow causes in sequence. The existence of law in the spiritual world is as true as in the outward universe, and he who would win a knowledge of those spiritual laws may progress thereto by the processes of observation and generalisation, of induction and analysis, similar to those which have led to the discovery of natural laws. But for even the beginning of this he must possess one fundamental faculty—the faculty of spiritual discernment. Without this, of what use were it for him to compare spiritual things with spiritual? If there be any relation between them, if any law uniting or controlling them, how shall he discover that law without spiritual insight? It is not given to every man to discover spiritual laws: it is not given to every man even to understand them when they shall have been discovered by others. Even natural philosophy is not understood by all men who have eyes to see. But that does

not prove that there are no laws of nature in the physical world. Nor does the inability of some good men to see or understand the laws of the spirit demonstrate that there are no such laws, or that they cannot be discovered.

This chapter makes no pretence to expound any completed system. Its aim is much simpler : to state a few of the discoverable laws, such at any rate as are of immediate importance in determining the course a man should steer and in framing any edifice of religious thought. The builder who ignores the laws of nature in his work builds foolishly, and his folly descends upon his own head. He who would be of constructive service in the Church of Christ must acquaint himself with spiritual laws else he is guilty of like folly. And for this end a few simple principles well understood and practised, are better than an encyclopædia of spiritual philosophy.

I. THE LAW OF DESTINY.—By this is meant that in the Providence of God acts bring their own consequences, and that God does not intervene arbitrarily to alter those consequences. This principle of spiritual determinism does not mean that God cannot—He being Omnipotent—intervene to prevent causes from producing their effects : it simply states, as the clear inference from observation, that He does not. If the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be. The moving finger writes—and, having writ, moves on. Time is never rolled back for us. It were impiety to say that an Almighty God cannot put back the hands of the clock of time, cannot give us our lives, or any

portion of them, to be lived over again. Do we not, every one of us, recall some sad episode of our lives, which we would fain undo, that we might redo it in a better and nobler way? But by no prayers, by no miracle, does God ever allow this. The past is past; He will not recall it. He will not undo it for us. He will not relieve us of it. He may in His mercy blot it out from the handwriting that is against us; but His infinite forgiveness does not undo the deed that was done. Who shall dare to say that the Infinite God cannot or will not pardon the criminal, even the murderer or the seducer? But even so, he does not undo the crime and bring the dead man back into existence or restore to pristine flower of life the betrayed victim. We may—in the goodness of God—be “saved from sin,” be “forgiven”; but we are not saved—and this is equally in the goodness of God—from the consequences of our sin. Our deed is, in its consequences, inescapable. It enters into our destiny. Our characters, for good or evil, are being moulded day by day by our own deeds; yes, and by our own thoughts too. Not only for every evil deed, and for every idle word but for every base thought too, must we render account in the day of the crisis, that day of judgment which for many men is now and here, as their ill-deeds, their ungoverned tempers, their unseen vices, are writing themselves openly upon their faces and distorting their characters. This is how men’s sins go in front of them—on their foreheads—to judgment, and pursue them to their dying day. We have in this life to work out not only our own salvation, but our own damnation, too.

For this is damnation—that light is come into the world : and the men whose deeds were evil and who have loved darkness, find the light of day revealing abroad the destiny that is closing in upon them in all its ugliness. Not even “the gods,” thought the old Greek poet, can fight against destiny. Destiny ? It is assuredly part of the ways of God with men ; inescapable destiny.

II. THE LAW OF CONTINUITY.—This law comprises as a general principle the acceptance of that inherent reasonableness of the universe of God without which all thought of Him and of His ways would be in vain. God is not unreasonable, nor are His works. God is, as St. Paul put it (1 Cor. xiv. 33), not the author of confusion. Nor will He put us to confusion in our turn. Men do not gather grapes of thorns. To every seed there is its own kind of body. Day follows day, and the stars turn in their appointed courses. To think otherwise were confusion indeed. But the recognition of the principle of continuity carries us a great deal farther, particularly if once we accept the universal truth that in Him we live and move and have our being. For then the recognition of continuity, the reality and reasonableness of the inherent significance of things, will save us from pessimism, from the nihilism of thought, which regards this present world as purposeless and the race of men as devoid of destiny. If all things continue literally as they were from the foundation of the world—if there be no development, no progress, no aim, no destiny—if the journey of man from the cradle to the grave be a mere vanity, and if the march of successive generations bring them no nearer to an ultimate

goal—then indeed is the lot of all of us pitiable. The stars are setting, and the caravan starts for the shores of Nothing. But all this is unthinkable if we exclude the idea of a wholly capricious and arbitrary Deity. If only to save ourselves from utter shipwreck of thought, from intellectual suicide, we are bound to hold with the principle of continuity. But equally, in order to preserve ourselves from shipwreck of thought, we must beware of the hidden anarchy lurking in the ambiguities of speech. No one who loves clear thinking and plain speaking can endure confusions of language which bring the bewildered hearer into moral perplexity. God is not the author of confusions of language; and it is our own fault if we let confusions of language¹ cloud our thoughts concerning Him and His ways. It is to the little child, not to the wise and the scribe who have learned to use language to conceal their thoughts, that the Kingdom of the Heavens is opened.

III. THE LAW OF HEALTH.—As in the natural world the healthy life is one of alternating activity and rest, so also in the spiritual world. If spiritual faculties are to be kept in usefulness they must be used, exercised: and they must also be permitted times of repose. Atrophy of the spiritual powers by neglect of use is all too familiar to us. The worldly man absorbed in money-getting degenerates into a mere financial machine. Getting and being are antithetical one to the other. The mere process of getting is in conflict with the development of

¹ See, for examples, the confusion of language about the "persons" of the Trinity, p. 19, and p. 186; and the ambiguity which arises from the employment of the word "sacrifice" in contradictory senses, p. 130.

being : and a man's success in getting, causes him to prosecute getting as though getting were an aim in itself, as though it were the aim of life. His sympathies with all the higher things dwindle, and he reaches old age, starved and loveless, in the plenitude of his wealth. Rarer, but not less real, is the case of the unbalanced enthusiast whose spiritual activities are feverishly lavished at the cost of rest and regularity. We are all familiar with the over-activity of the fanatic. So, too, we are familiar with the phenomenon of spiritual dyspepsia—the sick and depressed state which too often follows over-excitement. The tribe of revivalist preachers has much to answer for in the unwisdom of their influence upon young people, whose mental and spiritual health is injured by the unwholesome pious orgies of artificially stimulated religiosity. Lastly, we are familiar with the phenomenon of the spiritual valetudinarian, who is morbidly taken up with the question of his own spiritual health, and whether he is going to be “saved” or “damned.” Never do we find the valetudinarian occupying himself with the reasonable activities of life by working for others. The one remedy—to lose himself in order to find himself—is the last suggestion that he will entertain. And his spiritual advisers too often flatter his disease. They do not themselves know, and therefore cannot tell him, the secret of Jesus : how that whosoever wills to save his soul shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his soul for the sake of Christ and of His Gospel—that is in the service of man—the same shall save it. Giving of one's own life, day by day, for the deliverance of the many, as Christ did, is the law of spiritual health.

IV. THE LAW OF GROWTH.—Closely connected with the law of health is the law of growth : the law that life is never stationary but is in progress, because it is life. Progress, development, change are the note of living things whether in their advancement to maturity or in their decay when the meridian is past. Only dead things remain stationary. And the condition of healthy development is use. Disuse inevitably ends in atrophy. The sluggard's muscles are always flabby : the disuse of intellect ends in inability to think : the disuse of human sympathy leaves the soul withered and jejune : the disuse of faith opens the way to credulity and superstition. The assumption that the revelation of God to man ended with the last word of the Apocalypse contravenes the law of growth. Instead of looking forward to new and higher revelations, the Church has treated the Canon of Scripture as for ever closed. In its policy of negation it has stoned the prophets and excommunicated the reformers, until now the term "orthodox" has become a byword denoting all that is unprogressive and reactionary. It is a law of the spiritual nature that every disuse inherently brings about a corresponding disqualification. What the Catholic Church has suffered by requiring celibacy in its clergy may be guessed at : it can never be told. The prohibition has been a fatal mistake, in faith, in ethics, and in practical religion. A few years ago, in Rome, on Palm Sunday, I attended the service at St. Peter's. There was a solemn procession of ecclesiastics. Never before have I witnessed an assemblage of such faces. A few were young, a few were earnest, a few were emaciated or

ascetic. But the most part of the faces were those of unmistakable degenerates : bodily and spiritual atrophy marked them for her own in every stage, from fatty degeneration to senile dementia ! It was a sore disillusioning.

V. THE LAW OF DETERIORATION.—On its negative side the law of growth necessarily leads downward : it is a part of the Divine law of destiny. Did we but realise it, with what higher respect should we hold those actions of our lives which we call trivial ! Every slip in conduct which we permit ourselves, unrebuked, smooths the slope for more serious descents. Every gross thought we permit ourselves to think injures our inner nobility. Every departure from truth weakens our hold on truth itself. *Facilis descensus Averni*. Preachers talk of our bracing ourselves to meet the critical moment of our lives whenever it may come. But, rightly regarded, every moment of our lives is the critical moment : for it is in the little unregarded things that faithfulness is needed. Else the habit of easy disregard grows upon the soul ; and deterioration sets in ere we are aware. The permitted act becomes a habit, the habit stereotypes itself in character ; and the crisis is never met, because the deteriorated soul does not even perceive that it is a crisis. It is the law of deterioration.

VI. THE LAW OF JUSTIFICATION.—On the other hand, it is equally true and inevitable that every right act, whether of doing or abstaining, every little obedience to conscience, braces the soul and takes it a step toward the right. "The best perfection," said St. Bonaventura, "of a religious man is to do common things in a perfect manner : a

constant fidelity in small things is a great and heroic virtue." The ability to meet the crisis : to stand fast in the hour of trial is thus dependent on the continual and daily justification of character—and justification of character is surely what man most needs. It is, if anything is, a Divine grace that works thus : but the letting of that grace work, day by day, is none the less a matter of human will. We are justified truly by grace. Moreover, to exert this will to walk uprightly in the little things involves continually an exercise of faith. If we have no trust in the unseen or in the laws of the spiritual life and lapse into doubtful courses in these little things, such justification of character is not for us. We are justified truly by faith. But again all this is an active process, a process running through the daily course of life. By right acting, by right living in accordance with the dictates of the enlightened conscience, we are day by day really attaining to that justification. Our motives become adjusted. An imputed justification that does not make us really any better or stronger in character is a vicious mockery. We are justified by right actions, by the practice of holy living : for faith without right actions and holy living is indeed a dead and deadly thing. By trust, not by creed ; by faith in action, not faith on paper, is the character to be adjusted to the Divine pattern.

VII. THE LAW OF PERCEPTION.—This law, largely ignored by the Churches, nevertheless stands most clearly enunciated in the Scriptures, and is confirmed by centuries of experience. It is tantamount to saying that by doing the will of God (so far as we know it to be His will) we become capable of

seeing more clearly what the will of God is. In other words, he who would gain in religious perception must conform faithfully to that which he already is able to perceive. By doing right you attain the power to think right, and to see what is right. The law is nowhere more succinctly stated than in the saying of Christ—Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

VIII. THE LAW OF REVELATION.—But the law of perception may be restated, and with even more force, from the other side. Whatever portion of Divine truth a man is permitted to perceive, it is perceived because God chooses to unveil it to him ; and this unveiling is called revelation. Perception and revelation are two names for the two aspects of the discovery of truth. What God reveals man perceives, and the perception *is* revelation. The great souls, whom we acknowledge as the religious leaders, have from age to age been enabled to see a little further than the men of earlier days into the things of the spirit. It is to them, or through them, or by them, that the many revelations have been made and are still being made. But the conditions are precisely those already laid down. We have it in the Psalms : “To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show—that is reveal—the salvation of God.” Similarly, in the gospels (John vii. 17), “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” And Jesus could give thanks to His Father—the Lord of heaven and earth—that He had revealed unto babes the things which were hidden from the merely wise and prudent. It is not, then, to the intellectually equipped, not to the wise or the scribe, not to the

learned theologian, not to the presbyter or bishop, not to the collective wisdom of synod or council or assembly, that revelation is vouchsafed. The unveiling is personal, individual, interior. It is made to him who is pure of heart and who himself orders his conversation aright by doing the will of God.

THE LAW OF OBEDIENCE.—The serviceableness of any man to any cause is measured by the degree in which he is willing to obey the requirements of that cause. Whole-hearted allegiance, fidelity to the very end, these are the things that mark the sincere man. Without obedience to the highest that is in him, no man realises that highest. But obedience to be sincere must be open-eyed. Blind obedience is but another name for impotence of will, for abdication of responsibility. He who is cowardly enough to put off his responsibility and shelter himself behind the shutters of any organisation, whether it calls itself "the Church" or by any other name, is guilty of the *gran rifiuto*. To his Maker alone is he responsible; to none other, and to none less. But obedience in the majority of instances implies action. "He that heareth these sayings of Mine, *and doeth* them," is one of those phrases of Jesus which cut deep into the quick.

THE LAW OF SERVICE.—The service of one's fellow-men has always been held to be a virtue. Whether called by the name of *philanthropy* or by any other name, the service of man has been ever esteemed noble, save only by those tainted with the vice of monasticism. That strange development of pessimism which drove men into solitary estrangement

from their fellows was no following of the Christ who came not to be served, but to serve. Only by bearing one another's burdens do we fulfil the law of Christ. The title given to Christ by St. Paul (Rom. xv. 8), "a minister (διάκονος) of circumcision for the truth of God," is witness to Christ's function as a servant of the truth. Mutual service, mutual helpfulness, is our part as members of the Christian body; the health, that is the welfare, of which is bound up with the appropriate service of every member. Without mutual service the spiritual life of the community drifts into fragments.

THE LAW OF FORCED ACTION.—It is inevitable that the unwise forcing of spiritual growth induces a deleterious reaction. Christ taught us to look for spiritual phenomena in the appropriate order: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Impatience of results, that besetting fault of the Evangelical Churches, often leads to disastrous haste. When men of violence take the Kingdom of Heaven by force, and forget the apostolic order, "first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual," their apparent success is doomed to crumble.

THE LAW OF INULTERIORITY.—It is not easy to find an appropriate name for the law formulated by Newman in these words: "All virtue and goodness tend to make men powerful in this world; but they who aim at the power have not the virtue. Again, virtue is its own reward, and brings with it the truest and highest pleasures; but they who cultivate it for the pleasure-sake are selfish, not religious, and will never gain the pleasure, because they can never

have the virtue." In the spiritual life there must be no ulterior aims of a lower sort. Inulteriority in ethics is what unselfishness is in character. It is the same as regards renunciation; he who renounces because renunciation is supposed to bring him credit and honour will find it a veritable apple of Sodom, turning to ashes. So is it with fasting; he who fasts not for fasting's sake, but that he may have wherewith to feed the hungry, or for the attainment of mastery over his appetites, is assuredly benefited thereby. But he who fasts because he wishes to seem pious, or because it is the fashion to fast at certain seasons, exalting fasting into a mere observance or ordinance, will fail to derive the benefit, and will be the worse, not the better, for his fasting. So is it also with all set observances. Sunday observance in the puritanical spirit, for the mere sake of Sabbatarianism, is a soul-deadening habit and a false virtue, whereof the true converse is the spontaneous desisting from trade and from professional activities, from sports and travels too, if by such desistance we can gain leisure for spiritual meditation and for devotion. It is good for the soul to come apart from ordinary avocations to rest awhile; but the erection of the mere desistance from ordinary avocations into a spiritual grace is the veriest superstition. To be uninfluenced by ulterior motives needs singleness of soul. Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall have much peace.

THE LAW OF SUFFERING.—"I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." This was the message of the Spirit sent by the disciple Ananias to Saul of Tarsus as the answer to

his prayers. Years later Paul wrote to the Philip-
pians (chap. i. 29) : "Unto you it is given in the
behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but
also to suffer for His sake." Suffering then,
rightly understood, is a gift. And the law of
suffering is that he who suffers most has most to
give—to give in his turn to those who also are
sufferers. But, here again, the principle of in-
ulteriority asserts itself. Self-inflicted suffering, for
the sake of the supposed resulting spiritual gain,
fails in that aim. "He who crowns himself with
thorns is not thereby made the more regal, nor he
who mars himself with stripes the more partaker
of the cross of Christ."

THE LAW OF LIFE.—It was not till after the epi-
sode of Cæsarea-Philippi, when it had dawned upon
Simon Peter and the other disciples that Jesus was
the Christ, and they had made confession to Him of
their discovery, that He revealed to them the secret
of the law of life. All four evangelists record it, in
slightly differing words (Matt. x. 39 ; Mark xiii. 35 ;
Luke ix. 23 ; John xii. 25). *Whosoever wills to
save his soul shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his
soul for My sake, the same shall save it.* No man really
grasps the teaching of Christ until the significance of
these words has flashed into his consciousness. It
was the very secret of Jesus.

We have now reviewed to sufficient purpose a
number of the laws of the spiritual life and have seen
how widely, how deeply the spiritual life is like the
natural life ; how life is subject to growth, to
development, to continuity, to destiny. We have
surveyed the laws of obedience and perception, of
service and of suffering. There is, however, one

more not yet expounded—the law of brotherliness, of common humanity. But this opens out so vast a field, and subtends so large an angle in the perception of true religion that it needs separate treatment. It is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XV

Nihil Humanum Alienum

NO human being ever had a higher sense of the essential dignity and worth of human beings than had Jesus Christ. The service of man was in Him a passion. His teaching to His followers was essentially not to serve God but to serve man. He taught and practised obedience to God ; He put the love of God as the first of the commandments ; but He expressly put the service of man before the service of God (Matt. v. 23, 24 ; Matt. xxv. 34-46). He found men mistaught as to the nature and character of God, misled by the orthodox theologians of His time into false beliefs and into reliance on the efficacy of ceremonial observances ; and He strove to instil into their hearts a purer conception of the Divine Father, and a sense of the sacred obligation of human fellowship. For Him human nature was not misconceived as essentially bad, nor man as the inheritor of total depravity and corruption. The supposed antithesis between "nature" and "grace" was none of His Gospel. When young unbaptised Jewish children were brought to Him He did not pronounce them to be children of wrath : on the contrary He welcomed them to Himself as of heavenly destiny.

Even in the swindler and the prostitute He discerned some unextinguishable spark of good, more in accord with the life of the kingdom than the smug righteousness of the blind guides of orthodoxy. In short, He showed an infinite belief in humanity, and an infinite yearning to draw it up into a higher communion with the Divine.

The wisest and most far-seeing of thinkers have always admitted that the human is not infinitely divorced from the Divine. To-day the point needs no defence : for if there were not in human nature something that is essentially akin to the Divine nature, then Divine goodness and mercy would have no meaning for man, and would make no appeal to him. If God were a mere impersonal Force, a Cosmic Energy, that is, if He had nothing analogous to human personality in His essence, how could He reveal Himself as the great All-Father? Fatherhood would have no meaning, unless it implies something in the Divine Being which at least corresponds to the human attribute. A dim consciousness of this runs through the thought of all time. *Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit*, said one of old. *If thou sinkest deep enough into the human, thou shalt find the Divine*, was a saying of St. Augustine which lays the axe to the root of many theological fallacies. *All men share the Divine nature, since all have Conscience, and Reason, and Will ; thus in a most real sense, every man reveals God to his fellowmen.* This is the notable pronouncement of a living leader in the Anglican Church to-day.

It were well to bear in mind this vital nexus between human and Divine when we proceed to consider the aim of Jesus Christ, and the real

significance of His mission ; for a mission it was, as He expounded it. His own declaration was that He had been sent by God into the world with a definite object ; and that He sent His apostles as missionaries into the world, even as He Himself had been sent. He claimed Himself to be the apostle of the Father (John xvii. 18). Καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον καὶ γὰρ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον. As though to emphasise the point of His own essential humanity He adopted for Himself the appellation—known to every devout Jew from its occurrence in the later prophets—of *The Son of man* ; Bar-nasch in its Aramaic form ; ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, as it occurs in Greek. No Syrian or Semite could doubt the significance¹ of the phrase. With that picturesqueness of turn which is of the very fibre of Eastern speech, the phrase unquestionably carries the implication of the man-of-men, the typical man, the representative man, the man as man. Essential humanity, in all that is highest and most worthy in the race, is implicit in the name. His mission, then, was not as that of God to men, but as a man to men, as of a very Son of man to the sons of men. It was as a man, sent from God, that His disciples learned to know Him. It was as a man who enjoyed God-like powers over disease and the evil forces in nature, that they received Him. Not till a later stage did the conviction dawn upon them that He was the expected Christ, the Son of the living God. But they hung

¹ The writer has heard it distorted by an ultra-Protestant into an anti-Catholic, or rather anti-Marian meaning, urging that if the doctrine were true that Christ had but one human parent, He would have called Himself the Son of the woman, not the Son of the man.

on His teaching, and learned His message, as He unfolded to them His mission. From the all-too-imperfect records we learn the several differing terms in which He declared the purpose of His advent in phrases such as these : to call sinners to repentance ; not to judge the world, but to save the world ; not to be ministered unto, but to minister ; not to do Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me : I am come a light into the world.

We have but to turn to the confessions of the Psalms and the lamentations of the prophets to discover how widely, how deeply, the thinking part of mankind had become impressed with the sense of disaster and guilt, and of the need for a deliverer to arise to lead them out of darkness and sin into the light of forgiveness and reconciliation. One by one, the words of Christ as to the nature of His mission seem to emerge as answers to the soul-cries of the waiting world.

I have gone astray like a lost sheep, is the closing moan of the last Psalm.

The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which has gone astray, is the response of Jesus.

O that I knew where I might find Him, was the cry of Job from the depths of despair.

Seek, and ye shall find, comes as a joyful anti-phone from the lips of Jesus.

Why hast Thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! Such is the plaint of Jeremiah.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you;

let not your heart be troubled, is the healing balm of Christ. The Son of man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Doth God know, and is there knowledge with the Most High? And the gracious assurance comes: Your Heavenly Father knoweth.

When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness. And the Christ replies: He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Shall Thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? or Thy faithfulness in destruction? Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain? What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? And the twofold answer comes: I am the resurrection and the life. I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly.

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? was the despairing appeal to heavens which seemed coldly sublime, intolerably just. For judgment am I come into the world, is the calm announcement of Jesus.

How, then, can a man be justified before God? I am the way, is Christ's effective answer.

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? The response is a Divine argumentum ad hominem. If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven?

Beyond all question it was this supreme human interest of Jesus, this dominating devotion to the

needs and service of man, which drew men to Him, attached them passionately to Himself, lifted them up out of their baser selves, and brought them up into the atmosphere and light of a higher life. Here, they felt, was One whose life was being spent for them ; One who withheld not Himself from the supreme test of friendship that He should even lay down His life for His fellows ; One who descended—so they came to believe—into the very hell of corruption and death that He might bring deliverance to the captives of the underworld. *I, if I be lifted up out of the earth—these were His own words—will draw all men unto Me.*

If the elevation of man tarries long, if there remain in the welter of humanity so large a residuum that is degraded and decivilised, is it not because those who profess to carry on the teaching of Jesus have lost sight of the central aim of His mission, the uplifting of man ? Theirs is only very distantly the gospel of Jesus. The ghostly gospel of other-worldliness in a distant heaven hereafter, which they invite men to believe, is a travesty of the teaching of Jesus. So far from teaching His disciples to wish that they might go to heaven, He taught them to pray that the Kingdom of Heaven might come to them. It was a doctrine for living men, to fit them for life on this earth ; a doctrine for men living a regenerated, uplifted life, to draw them together in the bonds of a true brotherhood, in the practice of a new and holy fellowship and the enjoyment of a new and spiritual citizenship. And that holy fellowship, that free citizenship—what have the Church Fathers and the orthodox teachers made of it ? An ecclesiastical polity hedged

about by the dead hand of Councils and Synods ; a hierarchy of bishops who must be obeyed ; a system of creeds that must be recited and perforce believed ; a performance of ceremonies and an observance of sacraments ; a worship turning on rituals and vestments and processions ; anything and everything except the one essential thing, a fellowship in the living service of humanity.

Yet though the Churches have killed their Christ, and the uplifting of humanity has been delayed and maimed by the substitution of a gospel that is far from His, the world which He came to deliver and to uplift has not wholly remained dark or in ignorance of His spirit. That the task of uplifting has been so largely left to the outcasts of orthodoxy, to voices crying in the wilderness, to the heretics and reformers outside the pale, is indeed deplorable ; but by the grace of God the world has nevertheless made some progress. The world is not altogether in the barbaric state of the Dark Ages. Idol-worship, in the old gross sense, is gone. Slavery, save in the atrocious survivals of the Congo and Putomayo, is gone. The duel, save in the tragi-comic environment of German officialdom, is banished from civilised society. The blood-feud between families lingers in the vendetta of Corsica, and in the Camorra of Sicily, but it, too, is disappearing. War between nations must go—*is going*. Slowly, yet surely, mankind is “working out the beast,” and learning that the ape-and-tiger nature must be let die. We are coming—slowly indeed—to recognise the criminality of warfare. Even those whose warped upbringing precludes them from detached thinking concerning the present, can recognise

clearly the criminalty of the past. No one now hesitates to brand the action of William of Normandy in laying waste the whole country from the Humber to the Tyne as a piece of criminal barbarity. The outrageous cruelties of Cortez and Pizarro are no longer vaunted as triumphs of the Cross. The Thirty Years' War, which killed off so large a percentage of the able-bodied men of Germany, and crippled that nation for a century and a half, is now regarded as a disastrous blunder. Napoleon is no longer the heroic figure which he once seemed. His colossal crime of drenching Europe in blood demonstrates to the clearer understanding of to-day that scientifically he must be classed as a criminal degenerate. To the ancient Greeks, in the first great age of drama, the tragic figure of Orestes was none the less poignant because they regarded blood-revenge as a human duty which justified even the parricide. The tragic figure of Hamlet, in the second great age of dramatic literature, marks the advance of human thought since classical times. The transition from Orestes to Hamlet is not merely a transition, from a prince whose duty of revenge was carried out to its bitter end, to a prince whose resolution was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought : its importance is that it testifies to a change of atmosphere wherein the collective human conscience has learned to abhor the deed of revenge which formerly it demanded and praised. And even a Hamlet, in modern life, would be unthinkable. Acts such as his would assuredly bring him under the strong arm of justice for crimes deemed to-day utterly unjustifiable. Certainly the consensus of thinking men has taken a higher tone

so long as it is called upon to judge the past. But we are yet far from having attained to the working out of the beast. Ape-and-tiger animality among us is not dead. Few clergy have yet glimpsed even the elementary truth which in the plainest way stares us in the face in the teachings of Jesus Christ, that *all revenge is wrong*. Is there one Anglican bishop—or is there more than one?—who has dared in our time to enunciate publicly that simplest piece of gospel: *All revenge is wrong*? And that warrior who is guilty of the barbaric deed of devastating a whole province—whether from the Tyne to the Humber, or from the Vaal to the Orange River¹—whether he be called William of Normandy or Kitchener of Khartoum—where is the orthodox clergyman who has dared to assign to him his proper epithet, or characterise his exploit by its right name as an inhuman crime? The punitive expeditions which we send out spasmodically to “revenge” upon a tribe of ignorant natives the killing of some grasping trader who has angered them, ought we not to regard these as horrible blots on our official “Christianity”? Yet we decorate the leaders of these punitive expeditions, and give medals to the “heroes” on their return from the butchery! The ecclesiastics who bless our banners, and hold commemorative services “under the dome” of St. Paul’s, and congratulate the victors on having vindicated the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, how little sense have they of the gospel of Jesus—*non vanno i di lor pensieri a Nazarete*.

¹ In the House of Commons, June 8, 1904, the then Colonial Secretary, the late Hon. A. Lyttelton, admitted the *entire destruction* of the farms throughout the Orange Free State.

The priest makes common cause with the warrior, and blesses his bloody deeds : but that is priestcraft, not Christianity—and priestcraft, like war, must go. It is no part of the gospel of Nazareth. It is no part of the evangel of humanity, this blessing of the warrior by the priest. Of such is not the Kingdom of Heaven.

In thousands of ways the failure of our "Christianity," the incompleteness of the "working out the beast," makes itself evident. Drunkenness and prostitution are still rampant in our cities ; sodden ignorance lies heavily not only on slum parishes but on half our rural villages. The seamy side of life revealed in our police-courts shows how very far the multitudes are from being lifted up out of vile degradation. In the great industrial towns the only enthusiasm that counts is the enthusiasm for "sport"—for sport which means not active recreation, but huge crowds to watch paid professional players, and to bet on their successes or reverses. All sport that is not recreative—gymnastic,—that does not recreate the frame or invigorate the mind, is wasteful and harmful. When will the leaders of the people begin to recognise this ? Degeneracy and disease are writ large on vast herds of toilers who seek in sheer soulless excitement an escape from the drudgery of their lives. If we have abolished slavery in its grosser form, we have not yet found means to abolish the slavery of the sweating shop. The man who grinds the faces of the poor, or who defrauds the community by swindling prospectuses of public companies, is still received and honoured provided he will subscribe freely to party funds, or build

chapels for the respectable, or preside at Bible Society meetings. Our newspapers live largely on lying advertisements, of patent medicines, and details of ghastly murders¹—yet every student of sociology knows that both these things are social concerns that corrupt the community. But the task of exposing from time to time the abuses of the Press has been largely left to men who made no profession of Christianity, while the watch-dogs of the Church have been dumb, though this is not a pestilence that walketh in darkness but a destruction that walketh at noonday. The watch-dogs of the Church are, for the present, much more concerned in the jejune discussion of what they call Reunion, or in the prevention of a woman from marrying the widower of her deceased sister, or in the appointment of more bishops, than in the uplifting of the sons of men. They will have their reward.

In the previous chapter, dealing with Spiritual Laws, we spoke of the Law of Brotherliness, only to reserve it for fuller consideration here.

The great Apostle in one of his Epistles uses the striking injunction : *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* What law? Clearly the law of brotherliness. The Father, who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust—yea, on the rebellious also—has made all men of

¹ One of the leading London daily papers of Monday, June 23, 1913, had an article glorying in the exploit of their correspondent in having engaged a special train so as to be the only newspaper to give its readers full details respecting a certain ghastly murder.

one blood. We are all children of the one Father—brothers, who should be bound together in brotherly sympathy. The common bond of fellowship, which makes us rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, constrains us, too, to bear one another's burdens, to take up daily the cross of suffering humanity, and to follow the Christ in the service of man. To set one's face like a flint against the gain that is another's loss, against all profit-making that involves another's ruin, against the unholy winnings of the gambler and the sweater, against all advancement gained by unsanctified means, or which foster the degradation of the toiler, this is within the reach of all: it is the duty we owe to our fellow-men. *Non olet*—it does not smell—a worldly minded prelate is reported to have said, when one queried with him whether the Church should receive the monies offered by the poor prostitutes of the city. But no plea of *non olet* will excuse any—pope or king, priest or layman—in the ultimate assize when the blood of our fellow creatures cries from the ground against us for the indefensible profits we may have made out of the wreck of human lives. We are, inescapably, unshirkably, our brothers' keepers. "But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford!" exclaimed the pious Puritan on meeting a criminal on the way from the old prison of Clerkenwell on his way to execution at Tyburn. Aye, but have we, when we have met one of the sad specimens of human wreckage that wander in our streets, ever raised the query within ourselves: how far am I responsible for the misery and degradation of this poor wretch? The old excuse, "Am I my brother's keeper?" will

avail nought when the accuser is our own guilty conscience as we think of our failure to fulfil the law of Christ in the bearing of one another's burden of poverty and sorrow and suffering. Bound up in a common humanity we have all to suffer, the innocent for the guilty. Vicarious suffering there has ever been and must be, so long as human suffering persists. We cannot escape it by exiling ourselves from society. The hermit who sought seclusion to contemplate the higher blessedness in solitude, failed to attain greater holiness and missed more than he gained. He did but shirk the responsibilities of life, and lost many of its blessings thereby. In its efforts to flee the evils of the world, monasticism—to adopt the quaint words of an old writer—"put out its own eyes." The beatific vision is not given to him who refuses to see the Christ walking amongst the common people. It is ever the error of the ascetic. He who withdraws from the natural joys and sorrows of human life, and denies himself its simple pleasures for the sake of an abstract denial and for a voluntary humiliation, is no whit nearer the Kingdom of Heaven for his abjuration. His artificial righteousness ends in an artificial virtue which is no virtue at all. It was not Christ's way.

"Poison not thy wine
With bitter herbs if He has made it sweet.
Who crowns himself a king is not the more
Royal ; nor he who mars himself with stripes
The more partaker of the Cross of Christ."

Of all the anti-social and mischievous fruits of the doctrine of asceticism there is surely none more evil than the superstition of the superiority of the

unmarried state. That the sacred office of motherhood is inferior to perpetual virginity, is a pagan notion which has wrought incalculable harm to the human race. It has been largely built upon the myth of the virgin birth of Christ, a dogma unknown to the earliest age of apostolic times. This is not the place to discuss the origin of the legend; but its influence on thought cannot be questioned. Even to-day the practice of the Church is founded on the implication that motherhood—the most sacred episode in a woman's life—instead of being a holy and sanctifying experience of divinest import, is an unclean event requiring to be expiated by a special liturgical ceremony. Not until this abominable error is by the enlightened conscience of mankind cast out and replaced by a purer and holier thought will the Prayer-book be cleansed of a deep and deadly stain. And until marriage is regarded from the higher point of view as the entrance on a newer and more sacred phase of life instead of being merely a liturgical ceremony, incomplete without a priest and a ring, there is little hope for a purer and higher standard in the observance of its responsibilities. Recent discussions respecting the laws of marriage and divorce have revealed the amazing blindness of the clergy to any and every view but the one to which their professional training has limited them. The fact remains that in that Christian sect amongst which the marriage rite is the simplest, without either priest or ring; the faithful observance of the marriage covenant is admittedly far above the average, while within its borders adultery and divorce are practically unknown. In the interest of the human race the ideal purity,

of the family life ought not to be sullied by the perpetuation of the monstrous pagan doctrine of the superior holiness of the unmarried state. Of the evils and disasters wrought by the enforced celibacy of the clergy there is no need to speak. Strange light is thrown upon the ecclesiastical frame of mind by that comic and deplorable passage in the Life of Manning concerning his wife's death, a passage which even his biographer found it expedient to omit from the second edition of that work. The warped Tractarian view of marriage is often defended as presenting a high ideal ; but the good is here the enemy of the best, and it obscures the higher ideal by its arbitrariness. A true virtue is not circumscribed by the ecclesiastical definition of it. The wretched laxity of fashionable society, with its double standard of morals is a painful commentary on the failure of the Church in this regard.

To resume the more direct theme of this chapter—the service of man. We have commented in another place on the striking pronouncement of Christ in the parable, or narrative, of the Great Assize, when the Arbiter of the destinies of men divided them, as a shepherd dividing the sheep from the goats. What was the criterion which He set up in that solemn adjudication, as between those who were blessed by admission to the inheritance of the kingdom, and those who were doomed to annihilation in the perpetual fires ? Nothing that they had expected, nothing of the slightest ecclesiastical or dogmatic import, nothing that the theologians have laid down, or that the Churches have erected into a creed. Nothing but that human

brotherliness which is the fulfilling of the law of Christ. Put into other words, the judgment in the Great Assize turned solely upon fulfilment of the service of man. In that service He had given many quite explicit declarations of positive duty. Had they been obeyed? Feed the hungry; clothe the ragged; raise the fallen; heal the sick; cure the blind; lead the young; teach the ignorant; cast out devils; rejoice with the joyful; weep with the sorrowful; cheer the broken-hearted; care for the aliens; open the prison doors to those that are bound; freely ye received, freely give. And the sentence on those who had failed in these elementary duties of human brotherliness was this: *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, My brethren, ye did it not to Me. Depart from Me, ye cursed.*

Has the race progressed? Have men, in spite of the false teachers who have preached another gospel, been really learning to fulfil the law of Christ? Is the human race really making progress towards the pattern of the Christ? Is there to be (in this sense) a race of super-men? Of men lifted up? Is there to be—in all reverence be it spoken—a race of Christs? Can the race follow where the individual has shown the way? Or has Christ died in vain?

To such questions there can be, now or here, no answer. But any one who will reflect will discern the inevitable conclusion from the teaching of Christ, that there is, in the whole range of human interest, nothing that tends to the lifting up of man that is not inherently a component part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Well may we say with the great pagan satirist and censor, but in a far higher and nobler sense : *Homo sum. Nihil humanum a me alienum puto.* I am a man, and there is nothing that is of importance in the elevation of the race that is not of supremest importance to me.

CHAPTER XVI

Christ's own Creed

"My Father is greater than I." "My Father is greater than all."
(Creed of Christ.)

"And in this Trinity none is afore or after other: none is greater or less than another." (Creed of Saint Athanasius.)

LET it be accepted that the three Synoptists set down in all sincerity what they remembered or believed to be truly reported of the actual words and teaching of Jesus Christ. Let it be further accepted that the writer of the fourth Gospel, though he wrote at a greater distance of time from the event, and though his thought was tinged by the philosophies of the Alexandrian school, in equal sincerity set down what he believed to be a true report of the teachings of Christ. Then, within these limits, it is possible with care and patience to glean from the fragments preserved to us in these four Gospels many precious grains which have survived the spoliation of after ages. Amongst these garnered possessions none are of more importance to us than those which relate to the beliefs held and professed by the Master Himself. In short, it is possible, within these limits, and apart from all the aberrations of later theological schools, to recover Jesus Christ's own creed.

For all who reverence the name of Jesus Christ, and who strive to follow Him, it must be a matter of supreme importance to ascertain exactly, or at least as exactly as the surviving data admit, what were the beliefs which He held as to God and heaven ; as to sin, and death, and evil ; as to the world to come and the life after death. To make a complete analysis on these points is probably beyond the powers of any one mind ; certainly it is far beyond those of the present writer. But the strange thing is that no person seems even yet to have attempted the task. The fathers, the doctors, the theologians, the preachers, have written shoals of books, discourses, treatises, sermons on Jesus Christ and on the creeds of the Churches. But has one of them ever set himself seriously and single-heartedly to discover—free from all preconceived theological notions—what were the things that Jesus Christ Himself believed ? Take, for instance, any one of the more disputed points in the creeds of Christianity ; say the doctrine of purgatory. About the doctrine of purgatory every theologian has had his say. He discusses it from the Catholic standpoint, or the Lutheran standpoint, or the Jewish standpoint. He cites the Fathers or the decisions of the Councils, and declares that the Church holds this or that view. But has he ever gone back to the fountain head to try to discover Jesus Christ's own view on the subject, free from all bias, as to whether the result of the enquiry might or might not support his own particular school of theological thought ? Has ever a theologian written without trying, consciously or unconsciously, to bolster up his own side of truth ? The scientific

spirit which eliminates as far as possible all personal arguments, all attempts to establish a priori conceptions, all efforts to dogmatise, but which will at all costs ascertain what the facts are before beginning to frame deductions from them, has it not been conspicuously absent from the methods of the theologians ?

Let us at least, however imperfectly, make the attempt to discover what was Jesus Christ's own creed.

First, then, Jesus Christ professed belief in God in terms consecrated by immemorial Jewish usage : "Thou shalt love Jahveh¹ thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." In the immediately preceding episode of controversy with the Sadducees He had spoken of God as "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," phrases which would commend themselves to Jewish piety. In St. Mark's version (chap. xii. 29) Jesus prefaced His reply to the scribe by quoting the words : "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. vi. 4), the characteristic utterance of that ardent monotheism which had swayed the nation in unbroken purity ever since the captivity.

There does not appear to be any phrase in the utterances of Jesus which specifically attributes to God the function of Creator ; but He addressed

¹ The Greek text of Matt. xxii. 37 says, of course, *the Lord*. Jesus Himself habitually spoke Aramaic not Greek. But assuredly on this occasion, quoting from the book of the law, He used the official Hebrew *Adonai*, in lieu of the ineffable name represented by the Tetragrammaton, יהוה (= JHVH). Whatever may be the particular form He adopted in replying to the lawyer's question ("Which is the great commandment of the law?"), the effect is the same for the purpose of the present enquiry.

Him in prayer as "Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth" (Matt. xi. 25; Luke x. 21); and He frequently spoke to His disciples of "Your Father who is in the heavens" (Mark xi. 25, etc.). To that Heavenly Father He attributed Omnipotence (Mark x. 27) and apparently Omniscience (Matt. vi. 18, 32), neither of which attributions He claimed for Himself. He was emphatic as to the oneness of the God to whom He prayed, and whom He called His Father. "One is your Father who is in the heavens," He said (Matt. xxiii. 9); and when an ardent admirer addressed Him as "Good Master," He replied, as recorded by the Synoptists (Matt. xix. 17; Mark x. 18; Luke xviii. 19), "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is God." The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God was admittedly much older than the mission of Jesus. The Psalmist could say: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 13); and the words of the Prophet, "Doubtless Thou art our Father," are plain. But Jesus put new meaning into the attribute; and the lessons which He poured out in the early days of His mission abounded in illustrations of this theme.¹ If an earthly father knows how to give good gifts to his offspring, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him? The parable of the prodigal son is a sufficient proof that He rejected the notion that God required any propitiation or blood atonement to reconcile Him to

¹ As a leading Anglican divine has said: "The religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of the paternity of God."

the repentant sinner. That God was a God of love and not a revengeful or capricious deity, came as a new revelation not only to the polytheists of the surrounding nations, but even to the strict Jews, educated as they had been in the belief that Jahveh was a jealous God, visiting the iniquities¹ of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations. Nowhere more finely than in the first Epistle of John (iv. 7-21) is this characteristic part of the doctrine of Christ amplified and expounded.

The next point which claims attention in the creed of Christ is His own relation to God. Again and again He claimed special sonship and a Divine mission. "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me" (John viii. 42). "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and none knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is, but the Son, and He to whom the Son is willing to reveal Him" (Luke x. 22, and Matt. xi. 27): and again, "As the Father knoweth Me, even so I know the Father" (John x. 15). That He claimed neither identity nor equality with God is plain from several sources. When His enemies accused Him of making Himself equal with God, He replied: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these doeth the Son likewise" (John v. 19); and again: "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John viii. 28). He spoke of Himself as casting out demons not by His own

¹ But see Ezekiel xviii., where the prophet expressly repudiates the idea of hereditary vengeance.

power but "by the finger of God" (Luke xi. 20). In the intimate discourse to His select disciples, reported in John xiv. 28, He said: "My Father is greater¹ than I." Of Him the apostle Paul declared (Phil. ii. 6) that, though being in the form of God, "He thought equality with God not a thing to be grasped at, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." He spoke of the temple at Jerusalem as "My Father's house" (John ii. 16). When the Jews thronged Him to know whether He claimed to be the Christ, He referred them to the works which He did in His Father's name, and told them "My Father is greater than all"; "I and the Father We are one" (John x. 29, 30); and when they took up stones to stone Him, supposing that by these words He had claimed equality with God, He corrected them by this emphatic remonstrance (John x. 36-38), "Do ye say of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world 'thou blasphemest,' because I said 'I am Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." These Johannine phrases are of wonderful depth: they suggest a transcendent immanence, a sublime communion: but they do not declare an identity or an equality. Still less do the words of the Synoptists.

But even more clearly than by any of these

¹ In view of this emphatic part of the Creed of Christ, what becomes of the contradictory assertion in the Creed of St. Athanasius: "And in this Trinity none is afore or after other: *none is greater*, or less than another"? The statement is on the face of it false, unless Athanasius knew better than Jesus.

passages, the relation of Jesus to His Father is expressed by the prayers which He addressed to Him. It is narrated (Luke vi. 12) how Jesus continued all night "in prayer to God." He addressed Him as "Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Luke x. 21); and as "Abba, Father" (Mark xiv. 36). "Father, glorify Thy name" (John xii. 28); "Father, save Me from this hour" (John xii. 27); "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me" (Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 36; Luke xxii. 42), were phrases in which He poured out His soul. In the last agony He ejaculated: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34). Perhaps the most striking phrase, in that by the disjunctive use of the word "and" it unmistakably fixes the monotheistic principle, is that which is found in John xvii. 3, in the prayer: "that they might know Thee the One true God and [Me] Jesus Christ whom Thou didst send." That this sharp and substantial distinction was accepted by the apostles is evident by other references; for example, St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. i. 17) utters the prayer "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation." The significance of the phrase is unmistakable.

The relations which Jesus believed to subsist between God and man may be learned from various passages in the Gospels. His doctrine that all men were children of the Most High, and that the Fatherhood of God implied in itself the brotherhood of man, He illustrated in many ways, by parable, as also by direct injunction. Take this: "Love your

enemies ; bless those who damn you ; do good to those who hate you ; and pray for those who abuse you and persecute you " (Matt. v. 44) : a wonderful precept, indeed ; but the reason He gave for it is the more wonderful : " That ye may be sons of your Father who is in the heavens ; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And again (Luke vi. 35), " Ye shall be sons of the Highest ; for He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father also is merciful." And again : " And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. . . . Judge not and ye shall not be judged ; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned ; forgive and ye shall be forgiven " (Luke vi. 31-37). " If ye forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you " (Matt. vi. 14). The depth of this relation which made men sons of the Most High can only be realised when it is seen how completely He identified His own Sonship with the Sonship which He thus proclaimed. Early in His ministry He declared (Matt. xii. 50), " Whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in the heavens, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." At the very close of the fourth Gospel, it is narrated how in one of the post-crucifixion appearances, He gave the command to Mary : " Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father ; and to My God and your God " (John xx. 17). Surely it was in the very spirit of these words that the great apostle declared that the purpose of God, in calling those whom He designated to conformity to the

image of His Son, was "that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

There is one of the parables of Jesus, exceedingly instructive in this relation, which seems to have been overlooked by the theologians, or ignored because it tells against their preconceptions. It is that of the vine, narrated in John xv. 1-8. Christ here represents Himself as the vine and His disciples as the branches, some of them unfruitful, to be removed and cast out to destruction, and others, fruit-bearing, to be pruned that they may be yet more fruitful. But having said, "I am the true vine," He added, "and My Father is the husbandman." If this parable has any meaning at all, it throws a searching light upon the dogmas of the Councils. So far from representing Himself as one having an equality of power and eternity, and as being of one substance with the Father, it shows Jesus as representing Himself to be of one substance with man, and to be as different from the Father in substance and in equality of power as the vine which he prunes is from the husbandman who prunes it. Theologians who have accepted the creed of Nicæa, the symbol of Saint Athanasius, and the XXXIX Articles of Faith, may find it very inconvenient that Christ's own creed and teaching should be at variance with their dogmas. They may try to turn the difficulty as they please; but the parable of the vine remains—unless they can prove that it has been wrongfully retained in the manuscripts of the Gospels.

The beliefs of Jesus with respect to the Spirit are also difficult to fit into the cramped phrases of orthodoxy. "The Spirit of your Father" (Matt. x. 20),

is the way¹ in which He spoke of the personal inspiration which was to sustain His followers in the hour of bitterest persecution. "If," He exclaimed (Luke xi. 13), "ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your little ones, how much more will the Father who is from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those asking Him?" He read publicly in the synagogue at Nazareth, and applied to Himself, the words of Isaiah: "The Spirit of Adonai is upon Me." He declared that it was by "the Spirit of God" (Matt. xii. 28) that He cast out demons. "God is Spirit" (John iv. 24) He declared to the woman whom He met by Jacob's well. He told His disciples (Matt. xii. 31-32; Mark iii. 29; Luke xii. 10), that while all manner of sin and blasphemy, even words spoken against Himself, might be forgiven to men, blasphemy against "the Spirit" (or the "Holy Spirit") should not be forgiven to men. It is obvious that here He did not place Himself on an equality with the Spirit; and that neither, on the other hand, did He attribute a separate personality to the Spirit of the Lord. In the closing chapters of the fourth Gospel there occur those wonderful discourses in which He announced His own approaching departure and the coming of the Comforter—the Paraclete—or, as He Himself put it, of "another" Comforter, who would not like Himself go away from them, but would abide with them for ever.. Then He explained to them that this other Comforter was "the Spirit of Truth" (John xiv. 17); and a few verses further on He added that the Comforter, whom the Father will send in His

¹ In the parallel passage in Luke xii. 12, the phrase runs: "For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

Name to teach them and to bring all His teachings to their remembrance, is "the Spirit, the Holy" (one). Lastly, in the post-crucifixion appearance it is narrated (John xx. 21) that Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." This, saving the spurious verse at the end of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, is the entire sum of Christ's words as to the Spirit. Not a word about "person," or "substance," or "procession," or "prævenient grace," or any of the cherished dogmas of the theologians. Did He not believe them? Did He even know of them? If they had been of the slightest importance would He not have embodied them in His teaching? It were well if those who profess to preach Christ to-day would preserve an equal silence.

The beliefs of Jesus as to His own mission are set out in many ways. The object of His coming is unmistakable: That He came in the service of man, and was concerned, so far as His own teachings tell, in no other method of redemption or work than that of bringing men to God. But this is stated by Himself and His apostles in various modes. "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. xviii. 11; Luke xix. 10). "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a deliverance for many" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might lead us forth"—*ἵνα ἡμᾶς προσαγάγῃ*—(from Hades, as the next verse shows) "to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). "But now once, in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sinning by His self-sacrifice" (Heb. ix. 26).

According to the author of the fourth Gospel, His mission was this: To manifest the light (John xii. 35, 36, 46); To manifest the Father (John xiv. 9-12); To bear witness to truth (John xviii. 37). Other passages from the same Gospel are these: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10); "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46); "I came not to judge the world but to save the world" (John xiii. 47); "God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17).

It would seem that at first Jesus conceived His own mission to be to His own nation only; for in the Gospel of Matthew (xv. 24), He declared that He was not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and (chap. x. 5-7), He ordered His disciples to go rather to these than to Samaritans or Gentiles. But certainly before the close of His earthly career He had a wider purpose, and His mission was to the world—to the cosmos, as the expression is throughout the fourth Gospel.

Some light is thrown on Christ's own view of His ministry by the expression which He used in John xvii. 18: "As Thou hast sent (*ἀπέστειλας*) Me into the world, even so have I also sent (*ἀπέστειλα*) them into the world." And again (John xx. 21), "As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you." The intent of this is best seen by restating it. As I send you into the world, even so did My Father send Me. In effect, as you are My Apostles, so am I the Apostle of the Father. Twenty separate

times in John's Gospel did He speak of Himself as "sent" by the Father.

Much controversy has been waged over the question whether Jesus did or did not proclaim Himself to be the Messiah. It is clear from the gospels that even His intimate followers were much perplexed on this point. But the idea that they had conceived of the Messiah as a national hero who should deliver Israel from the political domination of the Roman state, was so widely remote from Christ's own understanding of His mission, that to have proclaimed Himself as the expected Messiah would have been to invite widespread misconception of His aims. So far as the fragmentary history goes, it would rather indicate that He spoke and acted as one who was expecting to become the Messiah when the people's hearts should be so far turned to Him as to enable them to understand His message. Certain it is that the chief feature of His early mission was to proclaim the advent of the Kingdom of God. The nature of that Kingdom He unfolded gradually, and avowedly in parables. Thus He intimated that the heavenly kingdom of which He spoke was to be no outward overlordship or empire, but an interior spiritual dominion spreading from heart to heart amongst men, unseen, like the working of leaven in the meal. Much curiosity appears to have arisen as to the conditions of entrance to the Kingdom ; and the answers which He gave to the enquirers vary so much as to suggest that each answer was specific to the case of the individual questioner. In the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount He drew a picture of a spiritualised society, a brotherhood of such as had

entered the Kingdom and were living in its very atmosphere.

While some of the parables that filled His teaching set forth the nature of the Kingdom, others are more specifically concerned with the problem of salvation and forgiveness. They teach that forgiveness is free and unconditional, turning solely upon repentance and change of life, needing no sacrifice or intermediation, and independent of ceremonial or subscription. He was emphatic that even a son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.

Most striking amongst His teachings are those which relate to the renunciation of personal aims. To strive to save one's own life (or soul) was the very way to lose it. If He spoke little of the Divine purpose of suffering, He exemplified it all the more in His own supreme example. To be persecuted, to be put to shame, that is to suffer misunderstanding and calumny, was both the test of discipleship and the pledge of actuality in the following of Himself. Rejection was the very keystone of the arch. Professions of belief were nothing : it was by obedience to the will of God in the common relations of life—by the observance of justice, mercy, and fidelity—that inheritance of the Kingdom was to be won.

With respect to the great solemnities of the state of souls after death, it is clear from the Gospels that Jesus shared the belief of the pious Jews of His time in at least three such states or places. He referred frequently to *Hades* or *Sheol*, the underworld of disembodied spirits into which at death every man has to go down.¹ There is nothing whatever in

¹ That Christ believed in an intermediate or probationary state seems to be the indubitable inference from His words : "till he should pay the

Christ's teaching to show that He accepted the Rabbinical theory of death as the consequence of Adam's fall in any other sense than that current amongst pious Jews of His time. They believed that Hades, not Hell, was the consequence of the Fall. It was "in Hades" that the rich man lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus the beggar reposing in Abraham's bosom (Luke xvi. 23). It was to Hades that Capharnaum, the ungrateful city, was to be brought down (Matt. xi. 23 ; Luke x. 15). It was the gates of Hades (Matt. xvi. 18) which should not be able to prevail against the rock of Simon Peter's confession. But, secondly, Christ spoke also of a far other state, the *Gehenna* of fire, familiar to every Jew in the purifying destructors of the vale of Hinnom, in the flames of which all the abominations and refuse of the city were day by day consumed. Against that *Gehenna* of purifying annihilation did he warn the hypocrite¹ and the persistent sinner. The references are Matt. v. 22, 29 ; xxiii. 15 and 33 ; Mark ix. 45 and 47 ; Luke xii. 5. Thirdly, Christ spoke of *Paradise* once, in His answer to the crucified but repentant robber. Paradise in the mind of that age was not the heaven where God dwelt, but only its ante-chamber. Amongst the early Christian Fathers some placed it beside Hades in the underworld ; others in some remote region of the earth, identifying

uttermost farthing" (Matt. xviii. 30). Or does this push the parable too far ?

¹ The question in Matt. xxiii. 33, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" as thus translated in the Authorized Version, misses the true significance of the original. Rather do the words πῶς φύγητε ἀπὸ τῆς κρίσεως τῆς γεέννης ; mean this : "How can ye escape from judgment of being annihilated in *Gehenna*?"

it with the traditionary garden of Eden ; others placed it in the upper air but below the heaven of God. It is mentioned only two other times in the Bible, namely in 2 Cor. xii. 4, and in Rev. ii. 7.

Of future events Christ mentioned at least two. These He called *the Palingenesis* ("the regeneration"), and *the Crisis*, or Day of the Crisis ("the judgment," or "the day of judgment"). The former term occurs but once, in Matt. xix. 28, where its meaning is ambiguous, since it is not certain whether it is attached to the words which precede, or to those which follow. The crisis is spoken of in Matt. v. 21 ; and the day of crisis or day of judgment in Matt. x. 15 ; xi. 22 and 24 ; xii. 36 ; and in Mark vi. 11. Once also, in Matt. xxv., our Lord lifted the veil of futurity in the parable of the sheep and the goats. He pictured the advent of the crisis, when Himself, the Son of man, should come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, and should sit upon the throne of His glory to judge all nations, separating them as the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left, welcoming the blessed into the inheritance of the Kingdom, but ordering the goats to depart into the fire of the ages prepared for the devil and his angels. The great and important feature of this narrative is not the nature of the reward or of the punishment, but the grounds of the award. Pure human beneficence, active loving-kindness shown by man to his fellow man, unconscious of ulterior religiosity, was that for which eternal life was given, while the neglect of it sufficed for damnation.¹

¹ A note of Dr. Thompson's shows that he had intended to add at this point a further reference to the Apocalyptic elements in Christ's teaching and the relationship of Matt. xxv. to the Book of Enoch.

In other passages of His discourses Jesus spoke of another future event of which He confidently affirmed that it would take place in the lifetime of His hearers. Of this event He spoke guardedly, as of something the nature of which was not yet to be disclosed. He spoke of it as the day when the Son of man is revealed (Luke xvii. 30) or the hour in which the Son of man cometh (Matt. xxiv. 44). On one occasion He told His missionaries that they would not have gone the round of the cities of Israel before the Son of man should have come (Matt. x. 23). There is nothing in His words to suggest that the event thus foreshadowed would be deferred for centuries or millenniums. All the national aspirations were focussed towards a not-distant future. He told them of the tribulations that were coming upon them, of the approaching destruction of the Temple, and of the end of the age. Had He added that it would be thousands of years before the Son of man comes, that His coming would be in a far distant age which none of those present or of their children would see, that His generation and a hundred more would pass away before these things were fulfilled, they would perhaps have heeded these words less. But whatever the event to which He referred it was to be something much more near and direct. "Immediately after the tribulation" were His own words. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv. 34). Unless, therefore, His own disciples and recorders grievously misreported Him, the advent to which He referred is now a long past event. Yet in the apocalyptic visions and rhapsodies of the apostolic era a contrary opinion was

sedulously propagated, and the Church for more than a millennium cherished the idea, and treated His predictions as being still unfulfilled. When we reflect that not one of the Gospels was in all probability written down in its present form until after the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, we can well understand that the words of Jesus as handed down orally became so overlaid with the influences of those troublous times that no man can now discover their real intent, nor put back the imagery of fateful portent and overwhelming cataclysm into their true relation as actually employed by Him. In other words, we are not in possession of the material to decide with any certainty what were Christ's own beliefs in this matter.

A vast amount has been written upon the subject of the phenomenon of demoniac possession, and of the casting out of demons, which looms so large in the narratives, particularly in those of St. Matthew and St. Luke, of Christ's mission. However we may regard the subject in the light of modern psychology or of mental pathology, it is abundantly evident that Christ shared the belief of His age and nation in attributing epilepsy and lunacy to the work of evil spirits. The language which He used in the treatment of these cases is incompatible with any other explanation than that He attributed these afflictions to definite personalities whom He addressed as such, and who, according to the narrators, did on occasion personally address Him in return. And not only did He believe in a host of kakodemons, but in a prince of the powers of evil, a being whom He named variously as Satan, or as Beelzebub, using the current Oriental appellations of the archfiend.

No less clear is it that Jesus believed in the existence of celestial beings, the holy angels, the messengers of God. In Matthew's Gospel, where we read of the temptation in the wilderness, when no eye-witness was present, we find a personal Satan tempting Jesus, and personal angels ministering to Him after the temptations were past. In Matt. xviii. 10 He declared of the young children, the unbaptized little ones, that their angels do always behold the face of the Father who is in the heavens. In Matt. xxvi. 53 He spoke of more than twelve legions of angels being at His beck if He should choose to ask God to send them.

It is no use to ignore the facts as to these particular features of Christ's belief, however remote they may seem from us. The belief in a personal devil, and in demoniacal possession, is one of those matters which, along with the beliefs in witchcraft, and totems, and in the virtues of talismans, has vanished from the living mind of the present age. The thinking man has discarded totems and talismans, and no longer believes in witches or personal Beelzebubs, or in the exorcism of epileptic demons. They belong to the region of folk-lore, not to that of knowledge ; and it has been abundantly evident that religion has no need to resort to these picturesque personalities. Impersonal evils are far too real and potent to require fanciful attribution of personality to make their existence comprehensible. But in Syria, twenty centuries ago, these conceptions were part of the living mind, of the mental and spiritual environment of the age. It would have been just as impossible for the men of that day to describe epilepsy or ophthalmia in terms of modern

pathology as it is for us now to ascribe an epidemic of typhus germs, or of diphtheria, to possession by imps from the pit. Mankind has made some progress in enlightenment, and that progress renders the old language meaningless to the new age. By the grace of God new light has dawned upon the human race in the course of the centuries. We should be false to the truth, and to that which God requires of us, if we denied or ignored that enlightenment. Let us, then, with the utmost reverence, but with entire courage, say that in this matter Christ's beliefs, or, at any rate, His beliefs so far as it is possible to ascertain them from the language in which He expressed them, were wholly in accord with the state of enlightenment of the age in which He appeared; and that the language, at least, in which He expressed Himself with respect to them, has practically ceased to bear intelligible meaning to the living mind of to-day.

To sum up, then, we seem to come inevitably and naturally to the view that in this matter of His own beliefs, as far as they can be ascertained from the fragmentary narratives, the creed of Jesus Christ was (save so far as related to His own person and mission) that of an intensely devout, intensely spiritual, monotheistic Jew. With the ceremonial side of Judaism He seems to have had little sympathy. There is no record that He ever had anything to do with the sacrifices of slain beasts in the Temple; indeed, it would seem as if He purposely ignored that side of the national religion. As we have seen, His teaching was absolutely at variance with the idea that any propitiation or blood atonement was needed to reconcile the Heavenly Father

to a repentant sinner. Once, indeed, He ordered one whom He had cured of skin disease to go and show himself to the priests, and to make the customary recognition prescribed by the Mosaic law. In the high spiritual import which He infused into His every act and word He was as far removed from the ritual-loving Pharisee as He was from the cold, intellectual Sadducee. In fine, with the exception of His rejection of the Mosaic teaching as to atonement by blood, He was essentially in creed a Jew.

If to any sincere and devout souls who call themselves by the name of Christ this conclusion causes distress, let them ask themselves why Christ is in the New Testament, and by no other than St. Paul himself, described as *διάκονος περιτομῆς*, "a deacon of the circumcision" (Rom. xv. 8). To that question there is no other answer than this: because He was born, and lived, and died a Jew. Did He teach the central doctrines of Judaism and pray to Jahveh? Assuredly He did. Did He preach the dogmas set down in the three orthodox creeds of "Christianity"? Assuredly no. One thing, not found in any of those creeds, He did teach: that God is a God of love; but it is impossible to conceive Him formulating the dogmas and shibboleths which form the bulwarks of ecclesiastical pride. Once and once only did He write anything—and in supreme wisdom He wrote it in the dust. Alas! that a well-meaning piety has not been content with the Master's teaching, but has loaded His Person with tradition, and eclipsed His message in a cloud of dogma. An indiscriminating passion of adoration has thrust upon Him claims which He

never made ; has crowned Him with superlative attributes which His own words rebuke : the end whereof is unreality, and its nemesis that unholy strife of tongues which for centuries has made Christianity a byword.

From all such vain word-battlings and their sonorous symbols, from the *homoousions* and *filioques* of embittered partisans, from the unedifying quarrels of Arian and Athanasian, of Sabellian and Augustinian, of Calvinist and Socinian, of Trinitarian and Unitarian, let us return to the simplicity of Christ's own creed. *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.*

CHAPTER XVII

The Primitive Christ-followers

"Ubi sunt tres laici ibi est ecclesia."—TERTULLIAN.

IF we would see how far remote was the religion of the primitive followers of Christ from that Christianity to which the ecclesiastical systems have brought it, we must go back to such records as exist respecting the Apostolic age and that which immediately followed it. The first point to be noticed is that it was entirely a community of laymen. The Apostles, some at least of whom continued to work at their respective trades as they moved about, did indeed institute local government in every centre by appointing officials who are variously described as elders, *πρεσβυτέροι*, and bishops or overseers, *ἐπισκόποι*, of whom there were several in each congregation. There is no trace of these officers having at first exercised any priestly functions, and (judging by Acts xx. 17 and 28) these titles referred to one and the same office. In the classification, in 1 Cor. xii. 28, of the offices in the Church, St. Paul mentions "first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers," no bishops, no elders, no priests. But, as we learn from Acts vi. 3, there were business men appointed as deacons or

ministers, *διάκονοι*, who appear to have attended to the secular needs of the community, or to have been travelling companions to the Apostles. There were no cardinals or prelates, not even an archdeacon. If we pass on to the times immediately following that of the Apostles, the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, as Justin the Martyr and Saint Clement of Rome, we find the same simplicity. As there were no priests so also was there no sacramentalism. The supper of the Lord was still a common meal, eaten with no pretence of sacramental efficacy about it, any more than in the time of the Apostles. The Church of Christ was still a Church of the Resurrection. They had suffered too much from Judaising teachers to have any leanings toward Jewish presentations of the work of Christ. We find no trace of any doctrine of atonement by blood, or of vicarious sacrifice ; no hint of any altar service or ritual of reconciliation. The presence of the risen Christ, though spiritual in the hearts of His followers, was far too real to permit of any material representative. Mistaken piety had not yet invented the crucifix, nor had bigotry imposed any other creed than the simple avowal : "I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God."

Amongst the documents that attest these things there are five specially worthy of note : they are known to scholars as (1) The Epistle to Diognetus ; (2) The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles ; (3) The Epistles of Saint Ignatius ; (4) The Epistle of Saint Clement of Rome to the Corinthians ; and (5) The Letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan. There are other sources also, as, for example, the Diatessaron, the writings of Justin

the Martyr, and the evidence afforded by the inscriptions in the Catacombs of Rome.

The Epistle to Diognetus, of which versions in Greek and English are to be found in Bishop Lightfoot's "Apostolic Fathers" (Macmillan & Co., 1898), is probably of date A.D. 150. It is sometimes ascribed to Justin the Martyr; and Lightfoot identifies the Diognetus to whom it is addressed as not improbably the tutor of Marcus Aurelius. Lightfoot says of it: "The simplicity in the mode of stating theological truths, and the absence of all reference to the manifold heresies of later times, both point to a somewhat early date. Whenever it was written, it is one of the noblest and most impressive of early Christian apologetics in style and treatment." It is an earlier document than any of the Creeds, Institutes, Confessions or Articles in which Synods and Councils and Churches have sought to define beliefs; it is, therefore, of far more weight than any of the Creeds in showing what the first followers of Christ really held as their religion. It sets forth a conception of duty which has never been surpassed. It shows how far even at that age the teaching of Christ and His Apostles had gone toward the realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven amongst men, and exhibits that Kingdom as an actual growth within the social order, a leaven leavening the lump. In it there is found large-hearted charity, complete absence of metaphysical quibbles, wide liberty of thought. Its fervour of spirit and buoyancy of hope reveal no tinge of the Middle-Age pessimism that ended in the narrow creeds of the Calvinists. It knows nothing of the heathenised ecclesiasticisms of the East or of the

West. In short, it presents a picture of a community actually living in this world a life of devotion to Christ, and actuated by a large-hearted striving toward that bearing of one another's burdens which fulfils the law of Christ. But the epistle must speak for itself.

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS (abbreviated).

Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, that thou art exceedingly anxious to understand the religion of the Christians, and that thy inquiries respecting them are distinctly and carefully made, as to what God they trust and how they worship Him, that they disregard the world and despise death, and take no account of those who are regarded as gods by the Greeks, neither observe the superstitions of the Jews, and as to the nature of the affection which they entertain one to another, and of this new development or interest which has entered into men's lives now and not before : I gladly welcome this zeal in thee.

Come then, clear thyself of all the prepossessions which occupy thy mind. See not only with thine eyes, but with thine intellect also, of what substance or of what form they chance to be whom ye call and regard as gods. Is not one of them stone, like that which we tread underfoot, and another bronze, no better than the vessels which are wrought for our use, and another wood, which has already become rotten, and another silver, which needs a man to guard it lest it be stolen, and another iron, which is corroded with rust, and another earthenware, not a whit more comely than that which is supplied for the most dishonourable service? Are not all these of perishable matter? Are they not wrought by iron and fire? Did not the sculptor make one, and the brass-founder another, and the silversmith another, and the potter another? Before they were moulded into this shape by the crafts of these several artificers, was it not possible for each one of them to have been changed in form and made to resemble these several utensils? Might

not the vessels which are now made out of the same material, if they met with the same artificers, be made like unto such as these? Could not these things which are now worshipped by you, by human hands again be made vessels like the rest? Are they not all deaf and blind, are they not soulless, senseless, motionless? Do they not all rot and decay? These things ye call gods, to these ye are slaves, these ye worship; and ye end by becoming altogether like unto them. Therefore ye hate the Christians, because they do not consider these to be gods. For do not ye yourselves, who now regard and worship them, much more despise them? Do ye not much rather mock and insult them, worshipping those that are of stone and earthenware unguarded, but shutting up those that are of silver and gold by night, and setting guards over them by day, to prevent their being stolen? And as for the honours which ye think to offer to them, if they are sensible of them, ye rather punish them thereby, whereas, if they are insensible, ye reproach them by propitiating them with the blood and fat of victims. . . . Well, I could say much besides concerning the Christians not being enslaved to such gods as these; but if any one should think what has been said insufficient, I hold it superfluous to say more.

In the next place, I fancy that thou art chiefly anxious to hear about their not practising their religion in the same way as the Jews. The Jews then, so far as they abstain from the mode of worship described above, do well in claiming to reverence one God of the universe and to regard Him as Master; but so far as they offer Him this worship in methods similar to those already mentioned, they are altogether at fault. For whereas the Greeks, by offering these things to senseless and deaf images, make an exhibition of stupidity, the Jews considering that they are presenting them to God, as if He were in need of them, ought in all reason to count it folly and not religious worship. For He that made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein, and furnisheth us all with what we need, cannot Himself need any of these things which He Himself supplieth to them that imagine they are giving them to

Him. But those who think to perform sacrifices to Him with blood and fat and whole burnt-offerings, and to honour Him with such honours, seem to me in no way different from those who show the same respect towards deaf images ; for the one class think fit to make offerings to things unable to participate in the honour, the other class to One Who is in need of nothing.

But again their scruples concerning meats, and their superstition relating to the sabbath, and the vanity of their circumcision, and the pretences of their fasting and their new moons, I do not suppose you need to learn from me, are ridiculous and unworthy of any consideration. For of the things created by God for the use of man to receive some as created well, but to decline others as useless and superfluous, is not this impious ? And again to lie against God, as if He forbade us to do any good thing on the sabbath day, is not this profane ? Again, to vaunt the mutilation of the flesh as a token of election, as though they were particularly beloved by God, is not this ridiculous ? And to watch the stars and the moon, and to keep the observance of months and days, and to distinguish the arrangements of God and the changes of the seasons according to their own impulses, making some into festivals and others into times of mourning, who would regard this as an exhibition of godliness, and not much rather of folly ? That the Christians are right, therefore, in holding aloof from the common silliness and error of the Jews, and from their excessive fussiness and pride, I consider that thou hast been sufficiently instructed. But as regards the mystery of their own religion, expect not that thou canst be instructed by man.

For the Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind, either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use any different language, nor practise any extraordinary kind of life. Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence or study of ingenious men, nor are they masters by any human dogma as some are. But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians, as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native

customs in dress and food and in the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvellous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like all other men, and they beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth, *but their citizenship is in heaven* (ἀλλ' ἐν οὐρανῷ πολιτεύονται). They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and they are persecuted by all. They are ignored, and yet they are condemned. They are put to death, and yet they are endued with life. They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are in want of all things, and yet they abound in all things. They are dishonoured, and yet they are glorified in their dishonour. They are evil spoken of, and yet they are vindicated. They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good, they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they were thereby quickened by life. War is waged against them by the Jews, and persecution is carried on against them by the Greeks, and yet those that hate them cannot tell the reason of their hostility.

In a word, *what the soul is in the body, this the Christians are in the world.* The soul is spread through all the members of the body, and Christians are spread through the divers cities of the world. The soul hath its abode in the body, and yet it is not of the body. So Christians have their abode in the world, and yet they are not of the world. The soul which is invisible is guarded in the body which is visible: *so Christians are recognised as being in the world, and yet their religion remaineth invisible.* The flesh hateth the soul and wudgeth war with it, though it receiveth no wrong, because it is forbidden to indulge in

pleasures ; so the world hateth Christians, though it receiveth no wrong from them, because they set themselves against its pleasures. The soul loveth the flesh which hateth it and the members : so Christians love those that hate them. The soul is enclosed in the body, and yet itself holdeth the body together ; so Christians are kept in the world as in a prison-house, and yet they themselves hold the world together. The soul itself though immortal dwelleth in a mortal tabernacle ; so Christians sojourn amidst perishable things, while they look for the imperishability which is in the heavens. The soul when hardly treated in the matter of meats and drinks is improved ; and so Christians when punished increase more and more daily. So great is the office for which God hath appointed them, and which it is not lawful for them to decline.

For it is no earthly discovery, as I said, which was committed to them, neither do they care to guard so carefully any mortal invention, nor have they entrusted to them the dispensation of human mysteries. But truly the Almighty Creator of the Universe, the Invisible God Himself from heaven planted among men the truth and the holy teaching which surpasseth the wit of man, and fixed it firmly in their hearts, not as any man might imagine, by sending to mankind a subaltern, or an angel, or a ruler, or one of those that direct the affairs of earth, or one of those who have been entrusted with the dispensations of heaven, but the very Artificer and Demiurgus of the Universe itself, by Whom He made the heavens, by Whom He enclosed the sea in its proper bounds, Whose mysteries all the elements faithfully observe. Him He sent unto them. Was He sent, think you, as any man might suppose, to establish a sovereignty, to inspire fear and terror ? Not so. But in gentleness and meekness has He sent Him, as a king might send his son who is a king. He sent Him, as sending God ; He sent Him, as a man unto men. He sent Him, as Saviour, as using persuasion, not force : for force is no attribute of God. He sent Him as inviting, not as pursuing ; He sent Him as loving, not as judging. For He will send Him in judgment, and who shall stand

when He appeareth? Are they not thrown to wild beasts in order that they may deny their Lord, and yet are they not unvanquished? Dost thou not see that the more they are punished, just so many others abound? These look not like the works of man; they are the power of God; they are proofs of His presence.

For what man at all had any knowledge what God was, before He came? Or dost thou accept the empty and nonsensical statements of those pretentious philosophers, some of whom said that God was fire, and others water, and others some other of the elements which were created by God? And yet, if any of these statements is worthy of acceptance, any one other created thing might just as well be made out to be God. Nay, all this is the quackery and deceit of the magicians; and no man has either seen or recognised Him, but He revealed Himself. And He revealed Himself by faith, whereby alone it is given to see God. For God, the Master and Creator of the Universe, Who made all things and arranged them in order, was found to be not only friendly to men, but also long-suffering. And such indeed He was always, and is and will be, kindly and good, and compassionate and true; and He alone is good. And having conceived a great and unutterable thought (*ἔννοια*) He communicated it to His Son alone. For so long as He kept and guarded His wise design as a mystery, He seemed to neglect us and to be careless about us. But when He revealed it through His beloved Son, and manifested the purpose which He had prepared from the beginning, He gave us all these gifts at once, participation in His benefits, and sight and understanding of things which none of us ever would have expected.

Having thus planned everything already in His mind with His Son, He permitted us during the former time to be borne along by disorderly impulses, as we desired, led astray by pleasures and lusts, not at all because He took delight in our sins, but because He bore with us; not because He approved of the past season of iniquity, but because He was creating the present season of righteousness, that we, being convicted in the past time by our own deeds as

unworthy of life, might now be made deserving by the goodness of God, and having made clear our inability to enter into the Kingdom of God of ourselves, might be enabled by the ability of God. And when our iniquity had been fully accomplished, and it had been made perfectly manifest that punishment and death were expected as its recompense, and the season came which God had ordained, when henceforth He should manifest His goodness and power (O the exceeding great kindness and love of God), He hated us not, neither rejected us, nor bore us malice, but was long-suffering and patient, and in pity for us took upon Himself for our sins, and Himself parted with His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy for the lawless, the guileless for the evil, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else but His righteousness would have covered our sins? In whom was it possible for us lawless and ungodly men to have been justified, save only in the Son of God? O the sweet exchange, O the inscrutable creation, O the unexpected benefits; that the iniquity of many should be concealed in One Righteous man, and the righteousness of One should justify many that are iniquitous! Having, then, in the former time demonstrated the inability of our nature to obtain life, and having now revealed a Saviour able to save even creatures which have no ability, He willed that for both reasons we should believe in His goodness and should regard Him as nurse, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, mind, light, honour, glory, strength, and life.

This faith if thou also desirest, apprehend first full knowledge of the Father. For God loved men for whose sake He made the world, to whom He subjected all things that are in the earth, to whom He gave reason and mind, whom alone He permitted to look up to heaven, whom He created after His own image, to whom He sent His unique (*μονογενῆ*) Son, to whom He promised the Kingdom which is in heaven, and will give it to those that have loved Him. And when thou hast attained to this full knowledge, with what joy thinkest thou that thou wilt be filled, or how wilt thou love Him that so loved thee before? And,

loving Him, thou wilt be an imitator of His goodness. And marvel not that man can be an imitator of God, He can, if God willeth it. For happiness consisteth not in lordship over one's neighbours, nor in desiring to have more than weaker men, nor in possessing wealth and using force to inferiors ; neither can any one imitate God in these matters ; nay, these lie outside His greatness. But whosoever taketh upon himself the burden of his neighbour, whosoever desireth to benefit one that is worse off in that in which he himself is superior, whosoever by supplying to those that are in want possessions which he received from God, becomes a God to those who receive them from him, he is an imitator of God. Then, though thou art placed on earth, thou shalt behold that God liveth in heaven. Then shalt thou begin to declare the mysteries of God ; then shalt thou both love and admire those that are punished because they will not deny God ; then shalt thou condemn the deceit and error of the world ; when thou shalt perceive the true life which is in heaven, when thou shalt despise the apparent death which is here on earth, when thou shalt fear the real death which is reserved for those that shall be condemned to the eternal fire that shall punish those delivered over to it unto the end. Then shalt thou admire those who endure for righteousness' sake the fire that is for a season, and shalt count them blessed when thou perceivest that fire shall try men's souls as silver is tried.

In the simple statement of this epistle there is indeed little of dogma. Neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection is mentioned. The statement that God "Himself parted with His own Son as a ransom for us," does not explain how or to whom the ransom was paid. It is as compatible with the thousand-year-long accepted theory that the ransom was paid to the devil, as it is with any more recent Protestant dogma of redemption. The writer quotes St. Peter's phrase, "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. iii. 18) ; but one must not now read into St. Peter

the modern doctrine of substitution. Peter's view was that Christ was sinless—a lamb without blemish—and that therefore He was not exposed to the doom of descent into the underworld for any wrongdoing of His own. Hence it is necessary, if we would give these words their proper full force, to attribute to them the sense not of a vicarious sacrifice, but this: that though in sinlessness He was exempt from death in Hades, yet He voluntarily suffered for us, undergoing for our sakes that which for others was the penalty of their sin. He died not to propitiate or redress the balance of Justice, but to enable Him to descend to the captives and herald the resurrection, so opening heaven to mortals.

The Didache, or Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles, forms a fit counterpart to the Epistle to Diognetus. It is described by Lightfoot as a Church-manual of primitive Christianity, of date about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. It consists of two parts, the first of which is a version of a more ancient treatise called The Two Ways—the way of life and the way of death—while the second contains directions as to Church celebrations and as to the treatment of apostles, preachers and ministers. Lightfoot remarks that its early date is shown by the circumstances that (1) the itinerant prophetic order has not yet been displaced by the permanent localised ministry, but exists side by side with it as in the lifetime of St. Paul (Eph. iv. 11, and 1 Cor. xii. 28); (2) the word “bishop” is still used as synonymous with “presbyter,” so that the writer couples “bishops” with “deacons” as St. Paul does in 1 Tim. iii. 1–8, and in Phil. i. 1.

The instructions as to travelling apostles and preachers are explicit :—

But concerning the apostles and prophets, so do ye according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he cometh to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not abide more than a single day, or if there be need, a second likewise; but if he abide three days, he is a false prophet. And when he departeth let the apostle receive nothing but bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. . . .

But let every one that cometh in the name of the Lord be received; and then when ye have tested him ye shall know him, for ye shall have understanding on the right hand and on the left. If the comer is a traveller assist him, so far as ye are able; but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, if it be necessary. But if he wishes to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work for and eat his bread. But if he has no craft, according to your wisdom provide how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this he is trafficking upon Christ. Beware of such men.

As to the directions of the Didache which relate to the thanksgiving of sharing the cup and breaking of the bread, reference will be made elsewhere. It concludes with a reference to the expected Parousia, when the world-deceiver shall appear as a son of God, followed by a time of testing, the sign of a rift in the heaven, then a sign of a voice of a trumpet and a resurrection of the holy dead, to meet the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

The seven Epistles of St. Ignatius which were written by him to various Churches while on his way from Antioch to his martyrdom in Rome date from the early years of the second century. Though brief, they suffice to show the stage of development

reached in the early Church. Deacons and bishops are established in every Church. Creeds and ordinances are still entirely simple. The gospel of the resurrection is still strongly in evidence. In the whole of the epistles there is no trace of the evangelical doctrine of vicarious sacrifice or of the Jewish doctrine of atonement by blood. Occasionally the language shows rhetorical exuberance; as in the epistle to the Ephesians, where he says: "forasmuch as ye are stones of a temple, which were prepared beforehand for a building of God the Father, being hoisted up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit; while your faith is your windlass, and love is the way that leadeth up to God." In the same epistle he regards Jesus as a martyr,¹ speaking of "the faith of God for which Jesus Christ was crucified." He clearly indicates that the myth of the virgin birth was growing up, and apparently does not accept it, speaking of "Jesus Christ who after the flesh was of David's race." His anti-Jewish views are shown in the epistle to the Magnesians when he tells his hearers that if we "live after the manner of Judaism we avow that we have not received grace." The passage is notable as it demonstrates not only the breach with Hebrew observances but the dominant thought of the resurrection. "If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths, but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His

¹ To call Jesus *a martyr* is strictly in accord with Holy Scripture, see 1 Tim. iii, 6, μαρτύριον καιροῖς ἰδίοις—"a martyr in His own times."

death which some men deny—a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher—if this be so, how shall we be able to live apart from Him? seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit? And for this cause He whom they rightly awaited, when He came, raised them¹ from the dead. Therefore let us not be insensible to His goodness. . . . It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism. For Christianity (ὁ Χριστιανισμὸς) did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, wherein every tongue believed and was gathered together unto God.” As for the state of Church organisation it is sufficiently indicated by the direction in the epistle to the Smyrnæans: “Let no man do aught of things pertaining to the Church apart from the bishop. . . . It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptise or to hold a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God.”

The Epistle of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, which is of a date about the close of the first century, is a more elaborate document, written in the name of the Christians in Rome to rebuke some insubordinations which had arisen in the Church of Corinth. Its homilies are largely texts culled from the Old Testament. In its elementary theology, Old Testament arguments are freely employed, as witness the following passage.

¹ Compare with the current belief that when Jesus descended into Hades He led out Adam first, and then the patriarchs and prophets who had been captive till then in the underworld.

“Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is unto His Father, because being shed for our salvation it won for the whole world the grace of repentance. Let us review all the generations in turn, and learn how from generation to generation the Master hath given a place for repentance unto them that desire to turn to Him. Noah preached repentance, and they that obeyed were saved. Jonah preached destruction unto the men of Nineveh; but they, repenting of their sins, obtained pardon of God by their supplications and received salvation, albeit they were aliens from God.”

Neither in this passage nor in the two others where the blood of Christ is mentioned, is there any suggestion of sacrificial atonement. On the other hand, there is a very singular passage concerning the resurrection deserving to be cited as illustrative of the wonderful temper of credulity then prevalent.

“Let us understand, dearly beloved, how the Master continually showeth unto us the resurrection that shall be hereafter; whereof He made the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruit, when He raised Him from the dead. Let us behold, dearly beloved, the resurrection which happeneth at its proper season. Day and night show unto us the resurrection. The night falleth asleep, and day ariseth; the day departeth, and night cometh on. . . . Let us mark the fruits, how and in what manner the sowing taketh place. The sower goeth forth and casteth into the earth each of the seeds; and these falling into the earth, dry and bare, decay; then out of their decay the mightiness of the Master’s providence raiseth them up, and from being one they increase manifold, and bear fruit.

“Let us consider the marvellous sign which is seen in the regions of the east, that is, in the parts about Arabia. There is a bird which is named the phoenix. This, being the only one of its kind (*μονογενὲς*), liveth for five hundred

years ; and when it hath now reached the time of its dissolution that it should die, it maketh for itself a coffin of frankincense and myrrh and the other spices, into the which in the fullness of time it entereth, and so it dieth. But, as the flesh rotteth, a certain worm is engendered, which is nurtured from the moisture of the dead creature, and putteth forth wings. Then, when it is grown lusty, it taketh up that coffin where are the bones of its parent, and carrying them journeyeth from the country of Arabia even unto Egypt, to the place called the City of the Sun ; and in the daytime in the sight of all, flying to the altar of the Sun, it layeth them thereupon ; and this done, it setteth forth to return. So the priests examine the registers of the times, and they find that it hath come when the five-hundredth year is completed. Do we then think it to be a great and marvellous thing, if the Creator of the universe shall bring about the resurrection of them that have served Him with holiness in the assurance of a good faith, seeing that He showeth to us even by a bird the magnificence of His promise ? For He saith in a certain place : And Thou shalt raise me up, and I will praise Thee."

The Letter of Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan shows in what light the Christians of Pontus presented themselves to an unsympathetic proconsul, who nevertheless, being a man of science, took the trouble to obtain at first-hand correct information as to the character of the sect which he had to deal with. About the year 110 A.D., finding that many persons were brought before him accused of being Christians, he was in some perplexity, because the law laid down no regulations for dealing with the charge. He therefore sought instructions from the Emperor, to whom he wrote that many of every age and rank and of both sexes are involved in the danger, since the contagion of this superstition has seized not only cities but country villages. The

temples were almost deserted, their worship mostly suspended, and victims for sacrifice rarely purchased or offered. He himself interrogated several who were brought before him, even examining them by torture. He narrates that all he could learn of them was that the Christians were accustomed to meet before daylight on a certain day in the week and sing a hymn in praise of their God Christus; that they solemnly bound themselves to abstain from theft and adultery, to keep sacredly their word, to deal honestly with property left to their keeping; that after this they separated and reassembled to partake together of a simple meal. Pliny interrogated those brought before him as to whether they were Christians or not, threatening them with execution if they admitted the charge on a second or third interrogation. In cases of obstinate perseverance, he says, he ordered them to be executed for their stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy. The testimony of Pliny presents us with a picture of an inoffensive community, whose simple religion brought life and conduct into the place of the vital issue, leaving dogma and ceremonial as matters of little concern. His accounts, scanty as they are, confirm in every respect the much fuller narrative of the Epistle to Diognetus. The Church of Christ was still a simple, devout, non-hierarchical brotherhood; its Christianity was still of the Apostolic type; its gospel was still a gospel of the resurrection.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Foundation that is laid

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid : that Jesus is the Christ."—1 COR. iii. 11.

"Θεμέλιον γὰρ ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι παρα τὸν κείμενον, ὅς ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός."

THIS declaration is essentially the same as the Confession of Cæsarea Philippi. Both are statements of the foundation-stone of the wide and all-embracing Church of Christ. This foundation is not itself the orthodox creed, nor is it any one of the three creeds commonly called orthodox. It is shorter, older, more truly Apostolic, simpler. One in which all good Christians, whether labelled Trinitarian or Unitarian, Catholic or Protestant, can join ; even some pious and enlightened Jews. Here, at least, there is no divergence between Pauline and Petrine Christianity.

Compare it with the Confession of Cæsarea Philippi, as narrated in Matt. xvi. Jesus had been for many months companying with His little band of chosen disciples, going up and down Galilee, teaching the people, healing the sick, showing miracles of human loving kindness, and preaching the Divine doctrine of free forgiveness ; calling men to repent because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.

Gradually had He opened to them the mysteries of the Kingdom, and had been leading them from the outward to the inward ; inculcating the duties of doing justice, showing mercy, and walking humbly before God ; treating as a brother every fellow man ; and showing forth the exceeding loving-kindness of the Father in heaven. His personality had perplexed them by its rare perfection, and had won them to passionate allegiance. His tone of authority in spiritual things had surprised them, as He spoke to them in the Name of the Father. Sooner or later, consciously or unconsciously, there was bound to come to them the question as to *what* that personality and that authority might signify. Perhaps their personal devotion to the Master whom they followed flooded them with such an intense blaze of feeling that no intellectual questioning on these matters ever rose up, or at least ever formulated itself in their minds. But with the spread of His fame, the eager clamours of the people, and the muttered threats of hatred and persecution from the official hierarchy at Jerusalem, the question was bound to be raised. The crisis came during the journey which Jesus and His Apostles made through the borders of Cæsarea Philippi ; and it came in a colloquy between Him and His immediate circle of disciples, when He Himself raised the question :—

Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am ?

Evidently they were taken unawares by the question, the answer to which they had never thought out ; and they answered variously :—

John the Baptist ; Elijah ; Jeremiah ; one of the Prophets.

Whom say ye that I am ? The question had at

last been formulated, forcing the issue, and demanding answer. And while the other Apostles remained silent, searching their consciousness how to reply, the intuition suddenly flashed upon Peter, and his tongue rushed to the confession :—

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The remainder of the colloquy which follows on in the narrative of St. Matthew is a marvellous revelation of the real Gospel of Jesus. The real Gospel, but, alas! one the true significance of which has been sorely misunderstood, and seriously misrepresented. It consists of four short sections. (i) The first begins with the reply of Jesus to Peter :—

Blessed be thou, Simon, son of Jonas ; for flesh and blood did not reveal this to thee, but My Father who is in the heavens. And I say unto thee that thou art Peter ; and upon this rock will I build My assembly ; and the portals of hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in the heavens, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in the heavens.

It is added that then Jesus charged His disciples that they should say to no man that He was the Christ.

(ii) The second section states that He then began to show to His disciples how He must go on to Jerusalem where He would suffer many things at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed ; and how on the third day He should rise again. Whereupon Peter, turning indignantly upon Him, began to rebuke Him with the phrase :—

Mercy on thee,¹ Lord ! This thing shall not be to thee !

Jesus turned and smote him with the words :—

Get thee behind Me, Satan ! Thou art a scandal unto Me ; for thou mindest not the things of God, but those of men.

(iii.) Then, thirdly, as if He had been waiting for the appropriate moment, He called up the people round about (as St. Mark informs us) to join the band of disciples, and revealed to them the great secret, that principle of self-renunciation which is in truth the law of Christ :—

If any man wills to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever wills to save his soul shall lose it : and whosoever shall lose his soul for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he gain the whole cosmos, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? For the Son of man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then shall He reward every man according to his practice.

(iv.) The fourth section of the colloquy is short. It consists simply of the solemn announcement of a Parousia within the lifetime of some of his hearers :—

Amen : I say unto you, there are certain of you standing here, who will not taste death until they behold the Son of man coming in His kingdom.

In the present connection the most important part

¹ The Greek is : *Θεὸς σοι Κύριε*. Since *Θεὸς* is essentially one of the "mercy" words, the translation of the Authorized Version, "Be it far from Thee, Lord," misses the chief significance. Peter had virtually said : May God have mercy on Thee, Lord ! (an expression which would certainly displease Trinitarian readers), as though our Lord had announced something unworthy.

of this colloquy is the first section, in which Jesus definitely states what is the foundation on which His ecclesia, His chosen assembly,—His Church, if you will—was to be built. That rock, against which not even the portals of hades should prevail, was this intuitive truth : “Jesus is the Christ.” I say *intuitive*, because it was the intuition for which He pronounced Peter blessed. That which flesh and blood had not revealed, which he had not been taught by man, neither had he learned it of man, had been revealed to Him by the Father who is in the heavens. Observe the emphasis thus laid on the intuition. A truth revealed by Divine intuition is a very different thing from a dogma laid down by authority. Do you comment here that the truth summed up in the words that “Jesus is the Christ,” is and always has been a dogma of the “the Church”? That is unfortunately so. But Jesus Himself expressly excluded it from being put forth as a dogma : He charged His disciples that they should tell it to no man. For the value of the truth, its weight, so to speak, amongst the spiritual forces in the soul, depends not on itself alone but also on the way in which it has been apprehended and appropriated. He who after witnessing the life and listening to the words of Jesus, after beholding His gracious acts to men and all the Divine beneficence which shone forth in Him, suddenly awakes to the conviction that this can indeed be none other than the Christ, the Son of God, is assuredly in a very different position from that man to whom the announcement comes, propounded by ecclesiastical authority in some such words as these :—The Church declares that Jesus of Nazareth

is God the Son ; you must believe this without questioning or be damned for ever in a hell of fiery torments. What sort of foundation of faith—proof even against the portals of death—would that be ? Has the Church carried out the instructions of Jesus to tell no man that He was the Christ ? Has it followed the Apostolic order, and led men first by that which is natural to that which is spiritual ? Has it brought up its priests and teachers so to set forth the life and teachings of Jesus in the spirit of that Divine abnegation which led Him by the path of the cross even to death,—so to set Him forth as that the hearers cannot but perceive in their own hearts that He is and was the Divine Son ? Has it followed the Master in blessing the intuition because it was an intuition ? Alas, that the creed-mongers and the philosophers have prevailed to obscure the Master's teaching and largely to nullify it.

There have been numerous stages in the growth of Creeds and formal Confessions of Faith since the day of Jesus Christ.

STAGE I.—*The Lord, the Lord thy God is one : and thou shalt love Him with all thy might, all thy soul, all thy strength . . . and thy fellow man as thyself.*

Those were the chief articles of Jesus Christ's own creed.

STAGE II.—*God is good. God is Love. God is the Father of all His children, and all that the Term "Father" implies, as in the Lord's Prayer. In His great and fatherly love He freely forgives those who have forgiven. He even forgives repentant prodigals without requiring the offering of any sacrifice. The Kingdom of*

Heaven is freely open to those who repent and believe the news.

That is the Gospel which Jesus preached.

STAGE III.—*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The intuition of this truth was turned into a joyful certainty by the resurrection.*

This is the doctrine of the first age—the teaching of the Acts of the Apostles, that Gospel of the resurrection from which the doctrine of blood atonement is conspicuously absent.

STAGE IV.—Then, even before the end of the Apostolic age, stepped in Greek philosophy, trying to fit things into categories, demanding definitions, requiring a framework of thought and speculation, to the obscurement of intuition; and these it formulated as the ostensible basis of motive and conduct. Every new definition implied a new speculation. Christology arose. It founded itself indeed on the facts, but was dominated by the imperfect ideas and crude psychology of the age. Chiefest of these speculations¹ was the Alexandrian doctrine of the *Logos*, unknown in the first Gospels.

STAGE V.—Enter new theories, and new systems of philosophy. Jewish notions of blood sacrifice and of a sacrificial priesthood are reimported. Relics of other Jewish traditions, and Oriental mythologies find room, creating strange errors, and these in turn bring in new dogmas sedulously fostered to combat the errors. Even in the Epistles of John we find anti-Docetic texts to combat the

¹ Even now the most eminent scholars are not agreed whether the term *λόγος* is more accurately represented as the *Word* of God or the *Thought* of God. Yet the theologians utterly resent any suggestion that the *Logos* is not a person,

Docetist heresy that the Christ who died upon the cross could not possibly have been a real man. Also there arose a new polity governing the Churches. Disputes arose between those in authority in the different Churches, followed by a craving for organisation and co-ordination. Then began two fatal mistakes.

(a) The mistake of supposing that uniformity and symmetry or logical consistency was a test of truth and therefore a test of authority.

(b) The mistake of supposing that a majority vote at certain meetings called Councils or Synods was a test of truth.

From these two mistaken assumptions, there resulted in the third and fourth centuries the three "orthodox" creeds of Christendom—not one of which says anything about God being a God of love, and from all of which the Gospel of Free Forgiveness preached by Jesus is conspicuous by its omission.

Observe that this mistaken placing of authority involves three assumptions:—

(1) Assumption that God speaks to men through the vote of the majority, and that the voice, even of a packed majority (as in the Councils of Nicæa (325), Chalcedon (451), and Trent (1533)), is the authoritative voice of God.

(2) Assumption that decisions by majority of a Council, even if not unanimous, and though coloured by the prevalent notions of the age, are final truths.

(3) Assumption that the duty of the individual is to acquiesce in the verdict of the majority: that it is not for him to endeavour by the light of the Spirit given to him to understand propositions, but

to obey. This assumption is a denial of our freedom of choice.

But since to claim for ourselves this freedom of choice in matters religious is heresy in the eyes of the Churches, we must reflect how little religious freedom has progressed within the Churches.

We are still too much in the misty atmosphere of the theologians of the Middle Ages. The dust of the Council of Nicæa obscures the pages of our gospels. The shadows of Augustine, of Aquinas, of Anselm oppress us. The narrow vision of Calvin and the heavy hand of Luther are still upon us. There is sore need that we shake ourselves from these and go back to the foundation that is laid, and to the practice of waiting for Divine revelation in our own souls of the truth of God.

Now there are many conceivable views as to the revelation of God.

THE NARROW VIEW.—(1) *That to one nation only, and in one era only, God spoke to men.*

Jews holding this view fix the last chapter of Malachi as marking the end of that era.

Bible Christians fix the last chapter of the Apocalypse of John as marking the end.

THE WIDER VIEW.—(2) *That, on the contrary, God has never left Himself without witness, and that there is a Divine Voice, which in all nations and in every age, has whispered to men's souls. That the Holy Spirit abides for ever, and still takes of the things of Christ and reveals them.* What is manifested to us as Divine intuition is, in brief, the direct revelation of God in the soul. We may misinterpret it because of our lack of education, of intelligence, of thought: for intelligence is ever needed to clear obscurity, to

ensure the right use of words, and to constrain the soul from becoming the prey to unintelligent emotion. But intuition, rightly co-ordinated, is a fountain of living truth.

Besides these two primary views there are sundry others :—

OLD CATHOLIC VIEW.—(3) That the final gospel needed Divine interpretation, and that this was vouchsafed to “the Church” through three or four centuries, but stopped short at one or more epochs with (say) the Council of Nicæa (325), or that of Chalcedon (451), or that of Trent (1533). That the Church is responsible for the text and canon of Holy Scripture. That the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God must be received on the authority of the Church.

NEWMAN’S VIEW.—(4) That, instead, the whole doctrine of Nicæa and of the Athanasian Creed was really revealed to the Apostles by Christ Himself, to be later “developed”—a purely gratuitous assumption.

ULTRAMONTANE VIEW.—(5) That the Pope and the Roman Curia are the real depositaries of truth, and have authority to lay down what is to be received as final truth, including new and modern dogmas, such as those of the Immaculate Conception and the Papal Infallibility.

PROTESTANT VIEW.—(6) That Luther and Calvin rediscovered by Divine revelation the true theory of Salvation and Redemption, which they promulgated at the Reformation ; and that their dogmatic statements are true and final.

Now this Protestant view is just as far from being true as are the Old Catholic or the

Ultramontane views. The great Reformers were themselves in bondage to their own age ; and, unfortunately, the ideas that they wove for themselves have been riveted on the necks of those Churches that call themselves "Free." The fetters forged by Aquinas and Anselm, by Calvin and Luther, do not bind us. We have not so learned Christ, and it is to Christ Himself and none other that we turn. The twentieth century has the right to frame its own choice : it is not bound by the imperfect pronouncements of the sixteenth century, or of the sixth, or of any other.

And we owe this freedom to the enlightened souls who in all ages have struggled to shake themselves adrift of the entanglements of man-made institutions, and to return in singleness of heart to the foundation that is laid. Persecutions and martyrdoms awaited these dauntless ones who have won for us that for which they strove, the freedom to serve God according to conscience. The recognition of personal religion, as a direct relation between the soul of man and his Maker, not as a deduction from dead dogmas, we owe to them. Their faithfulness, in their day and generation, has made revelation and Divine guidance a living thing ; a thing not to be merely believed in as having existed in a distant past, but to be known and experienced in the present. They who thus kept alive the inner faith of the apostolic era freed the heart-religion of the devout soul from bondage to formulas. Their devoted lives contradict the superstition that uniformity of theory (that is, of creed—for the creeds are only men's theories about God) is either a test of truth or a necessary basis for conduct.

Their religion could never be hedged in by an imposed uniformity of creed, or by a prescribed order of ceremonial observances. The community of their ideal must be one of fellowship in aim, in suffering, in effort, in aspiration. They would lay no other foundation than that laid. They made the indwelling spirit of Christ the lamp to lighten the whole of life. Conduct, not creed, must be the test of admission to their spiritual commonwealth ; like their Master, they would, if possible, look upon every man *κατὰ τὴν πράξιν αὐτοῦ*, according to his works.

But is there amongst the organised Churches any that has made its sole bond of membership the right ordering of personal conduct, the living of the unselfish, consecrated Christ-like life? Have any of the Churches risen to the perception that *the foundation which is laid* must be an intuition and not a dogma? Is there one Church that has never cast out those "who follow not us"? Alas, every section of professing Christians, from the greatest to the least, has failed grievously to realise the ideal. In mistaken zeal they apply tests and excommunicate him who cannot pronounce the shibboleths of their creed.

Bethink you! What was Christ's own test which He put to the man, who, in spite of the intuition of Cæsarea Philippi, had fallen away grievously in the hour of trial?

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?

Not—dost thou believe in the dogmas of the Church?

Not—dost thou believe in Original Sin?

Not—dost thou believe in the Doctrine of Atonement by Blood?

Not—dost thou believe in the Virgin Birth ?

Not—dost thou believe in an Eternal Hell of Fire ?

Not any of these, but just this—*Lovest thou Me ?*

Would that we might all with equal power of conviction and sincerity of heart be able to respond : Lord, Thou knowest all things : Thou knowest that I love Thee.

At the outset it was maintained that the foundation that was laid, and which is still the foundation of the Church of Christ, is the soul-born conviction, the intuition—*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Unless we, too, stand on that foundation—not as a dogma imposed by authority, but as a spiritual truth of which we have become aware by Divine revelation in our souls—how shall we adequately respond with Simon Peter, “Thou knowest that I love Thee” ? For the penetrating and absorbing force of the Divine intuition within us will be the measure of our love.

Truly indeed were the apostolic words spoken that the foundation of God standeth sure : for it has the double seal which, on the one hand, warns off the bigot, and, on the other, restates the truth that conduct, not creed, is the key to the kingdom :—

The Lord knoweth them that are His ;

and this—

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

CHAPTER XIX

The Sacrament of Life

I. **M**EANING OF THE WORD "SACRAMENT."
—The word "sacrament" comes to us from the Latin verb *sacrare*, which means to set apart religiously, to secure by holy sanction. Hence the noun "sacrament" signifies something consecrated, or set apart or secured¹ by holy sanctions. It is frequently used in a narrower sense to signify a sacred seal set upon some part of a man's life ; or, in a still more restricted signification, something ordained by the Church touching some action ; whence the word "ordinance" which conveys therefore a difference of meaning from "sacrament." The English Prayer-book describes it as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" : but this is a description rather than a definition ; for there are many outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace that have not been ordained as sacraments.

There has at no time been a general agreement amongst Christians as to the precise number of sacraments to be definitely recognised as "ordinances." The Early Church apparently recognised but one ordinance, that of the baptism of converts ;

¹ The name was given to the oath which the Roman soldier took of allegiance to the sacred person of his Emperor.

for in the first age the celebration of the Supper of the Lord had not been erected into an ordinance apart from the ordinary evening meal. The early Fathers differed widely in the number of observances which they regarded as of holy sanction or prescription. St. Gregory of Nyssa mentions some thirty. The Roman Church from the twelfth century has reckoned the number of specific ordinances as being seven, viz: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, the Eucharist, the taking of Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction. But about these there have been historical differences; for St. Bernard definitely included the ceremonial Washing of Feet as the most binding of the Sacraments; and marriage was not declared to be a sacrament until 1150; and the Roman Church reluctantly adopted it at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The English Church recognises but two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But at the Reformation there were various proposals to retain as sacraments, or at least as "sacramentals," Marriage, Holy Orders, Confirmation, and the Visitation of the Sick. Bishop Wilberforce has defined "sacramentals" thus: "Sacramentals are certain outward signs and usages, instituted by the Church, which are the occasion of grace and blessing to those who piously use them." He gives Fasting as an example, and speaks of the craving which a section of the English clergy have for confession and absolution as "sacramentals." Innumerable sacramentals have been suggested, from the wearing of cinders in penitence, to the ceremonial blessing of an episcopal signet ring.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFE.—Next let us consider the significance of life. Consider the threefold

nature of man. He is compounded of *body*, *mind*, and *soul*; or, if you will, of a physical *frame*, *intellect*, and *life*. The Greeks drew no clear distinction between the terms *life* and *soul* for the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ means both.¹ The word occurs in eighty-nine passages of the New Testament. In our Authorised Version the translation is "life" in thirty-three of these, "soul" in fifty-two, "heart" in one, and "mind" in three. In Latin the word *anima*, likewise stands for *soul*, and for the breath of *life*. It is true, emphatically true, that the physical frame without the animating soul is dead; and without the mind which mediates between body and soul, directing the movements and operations of all bodily frames, the body might just as well be dead. Now the intellectual part of us, which perceives and reasons, is just as necessary to our being as the soul is, but it is not the soul; and the motives and affections which so largely rule our being and make us what we are, are in a far truer sense *our* life, than are the physiological and chemical processes that go on in our frame. It was only when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life that man became a living soul. Hence it is that *life* is by far the most sacred thing on earth. All that a man hath he will give for his life; and little will it profit him if, in the words of Jesus, he gain the whole world and lose his own life. There is nought that a man can give in exchange for his life. Do you tell me that in these last phrases the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ should be translated soul? So be it. But

¹ The Greek words $\zeta\omega\acute{\eta}$ and $\beta\iota\omicron\varsigma$, and the Latin word *vita* are also translated as *life*, but in a different signification. You can write a man's *vita*, or his $\beta\iota\omicron\varsigma$; but you cannot write his $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, or his *anima*. Or you can say he departed this *life*, or his *life* was a long one; where the word *life* is used in the other sense, not as *soul*.

then so must it also be rendered in the sentence of the context (Mark viii. 35), in which Jesus announced His great secret : *for whosoever wills to save his soul shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his soul for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.* The fact is that in three consecutive verses, 35, 36, 37, of St. Mark wherein the same word occurs four times, the translators of the Authorised Version rendered it twice as *soul* and twice as *life*, demonstrates the preceding point.

Life, then, as well as body and intellect, being all God-given can be only ours in trust. But of these three parts of our being it is the life, the soul which directs, and which reveals itself in our character, our hopes and fears, our loves and our aspirations, our things of the soul ; it is the soul's destiny which is essentially the aim and end of living. Our bodies will fulfil their functions and decay ; our intellect will cease from its activities ; but the incommunicable life that continues from this stage of existence into the unseen beyond, that is the highest thing that we can call ours, for it is even our very self. As we hope and look forward to a life beyond, the life this side of the great transition is the living treasure which we must guard and cherish to the highest ends. And, since the body re-acts on the soul in a union which we may neither deny nor avoid, it behoves us to rule our bodies in sacred conformity with the laws of health. To prevent the functions of the body is to trifle with the living whole.

Life, then, being the most sacred thing on earth, all life should be a sacrament. This is the meaning of the title of this chapter.

3. LIFE AND ITS SACRAMENT.—But if all life be sacred, if man—enlightened man—owes to God as a duty to consecrate, to hold as sacred, every activity, every transaction, every word, every thought, why should that obligation be limited or retrenched? If all life is to be lived under Divine sanctions, why make any distinction between *sacred* and *secular*, why set apart as sacred certain portions only? Where all ought to be regarded as sacred, the setting up of a part as of superior importance creates two different states or standards of sacredness. There follows the inevitable result that the selected part is exalted, and the remainder correspondingly lowered. A double standard in morals or ethics is in every case a declension. One very simple example of this tendency is the double standard of truth that is set up by the institution of the judicial oath. To a real follower of Christ there can be but one standard of truth; his *yea* must, at all times and in all circumstances, mean, *yea*, and his *nay*, *nay*; for whatsoever is more than this is a concession to evil. A real follower of Christ will speak the truth whether technically “on his oath,” or not. All society indeed holds together on the assumption that, in the main, men speak truth. But how many men in ordinary converse, in trade, in politics, will let their conscience sleep while they say things which if put on their oath they would have to admit to be false? The setting up of the oath unquestionably lowers the general standard of truthfulness in things said not on oath. As certainly as night follows day, so does the exaltation of a part involve a corresponding reaction at the expense of the whole.

Take another example. Fasting, the abstinence

from food, is, at certain times and for certain persons, not only a virtue, but a necessity of health. In the existing conditions of society, save amongst the poorest class, almost all of us, as the doctors avow, eat and drink too much for health; and even the poorest, when the occasion comes to them for a good meal, commonly eat more than is good for their digestion. For all of us it is good to desist from eating when our hunger is appeased, and to stop drinking when our thirst is assuaged. Our bodies will be healthier and our minds clearer for timely abstention. Fasting in this sense is a hygienic practice. To live occasional days without using flesh food is (except perhaps for invalids) a useful discipline for the digestion. Whatever be our views of the use of alcoholic liquors, no one can deny that if a man cannot from time to time dispense with such drinks for a whole day, he is becoming a slave to the habit. Fasting, then, is a right thing in its right place, even as a piece of worldly wisdom. Let us, however, view the matter the other way round, from the standpoint of the apostolic injunction that whatever we do in the way of eating and drinking we do all to the glory of God. Thus viewed, all inglorious eating, and all superfluous drinking are things that are incompatible with the consecrated life. If all living is sacred, then shall we be continually and from day to day curbing our appetites by the practice of sane and sensible abstinences—in a word, by fasting. But this will not be done because of any supposed virtue in fasting for the sake of fasting.

The Church, however, in its decline from the purity of the first age, set up an institutional fasting

of a wholly different kind and this Ordinance survives to our day. A strict Churchman must fast on Fridays all the year ; must fast for forty days in Lent (a pagan custom introduced into Christendom in the fourth century) ; must fast on four Ember Days and three Rogation Days ; and (some would add) must fast before taking the Supper of the Lord. By thus exalting such specific fasting into a sacramental institution, there is set up an artificial value ; and precisely as importance is attached to it, in just the same degree is the real virtue of sane, ordinary, everyday abstinence depreciated. And the artificially imposed fasting inevitably stimulates a re-action, as we see in the orgies of the carnival.

Far be it from me to deny that abstinence for the sake of others, whether to alleviate their hunger, or as an example of self-control, may be a truly virtuous act, but the virtue that therein is exercised is the virtue of self-renunciation. There is no virtue in starvation as starvation. The like remark applies to the abstinence that some persons find helpful at times in order to let their intellectual processes work more freely. But there is a world of difference between such abstentions and the fasting on set days, prescribed as an ordinance or practised as an artificial virtue. Notoriously our Lord and His disciples did not keep the prescribed fasts and were blamed (Mark ii. 18) on that account. And the only two passages of the New Testament which appear to enjoin Fasting (Mark ix. 29 and 1 Cor. vii. 5) are rejected by the scholars as spurious.

Another matter that is often similarly erected

into a virtue, and has largely become an abuse, is the system of tithes and alms. The follower of Christ if he really follows his Master cannot but give of his superfluity, nay, cannot but practise self-denial, in order that he may help the poor and needy, and succour the aged and those in distress by giving. But if he does not give out of a compassionate heart, or when touched by the spirit of mercy, or as a thank-offering, how shall his giving profit his soul? He who claims as a virtue to be reckoned to his immortal credit that he regularly gives tithes of all that he possesses is very apt to pass by on the other side when he meets a fellow-creature in distress, and to shut up his compassions against the brother or sister who is ragged and destitute of daily food. To ordain by decree that a man must give an exact tithe—or any fixed percentage—of his income, whether moved by feelings of compassion or not, is to harden the natural and Christ-like impulse of benevolence into a mere rule; exalting into an artificial virtue what ought to be an instinctive and generous impulse. It lowers the true spiritual value of the act; and just so far as it erects into a virtue the specified formal giving, it tends to discourage the practice of self-denial and beneficence in the ordinary walk of life. Disinterested charitableness waits not for times and seasons, nor is it circumscribed by rule. A virtue only if spontaneous, the giving of one's goods to feed the poor becomes a positive vice if it degenerates—as it did in the Middle Ages—into the maintenance of a horde of idle monks and professional beggars, or when—as is unfortunately often the case to-day—it is “organised” to keep in

employment a crew of secretaries, clerks, and inspectors who flourish on the subscriptions of the unthinking charitable. No such giving is or can be sacramental. "Measure thy life by loss and not by gain" is a truly Christian injunction ; but the "loss" must not be a calculated and bloodless payment of cash. It must be the free outcome of instincts of mercy and compassion, those natural emotions which are part of our spiritual heritage.

Life is indeed full of occasions the appeal of which we may not shirk ; occasions for the exercise of sympathies which because they are natural are none the less Divine ; for the discharge of obligations which because they are human are none the less sacred ; for the play of emotions which are at once spontaneous and holy. But the sympathy which is exercised "to order," the discharge of an obligation which is effected only under ecclesiastical penalty, the emotion which is evoked by spurious aids, are all alike worthless.

An instance of artificiality in emotion is afforded by the following example. There is a certain grace of tears, when out of a full heart we weep with those that weep. Probably none have really entered with even a faint realisation of the sufferings of our Lord without having been moved to tears, and to many emotional natures tears are the natural expression of sacred feelings too deep for words. But when we read in the lives of the Saints how the Blessed Umiliana, having lost for a time the grace of tears at the recital of the holy office, sought artificially to regain that grace by putting quicklime into her eyes, thereby nearly destroying her eyesight, we marvel what false notions must have

prevailed to suggest such a course. Yet this is only an extreme example of the distorted view of things which underlies every one of these attempts to erect into a virtue the specific repetition of some spontaneous and natural trait of human sympathy.

Repentance which in any sincere nature, is the natural and inevitable outcome of the conviction of sin—is a matter about which some of the Churches to-day are far too reticent ; on which it is not fashionable to lay much stress. But repentance—that true turning-round, which impels a man determinately to forsake and fight against the temptations to sin—not the mere uttering of the words “I repent,” but the abiding repentance that manifests itself in life and conversation is a very real and mighty thing. Perhaps the exaggerated emphasis thrown by evangelical preachers on “conversion,” as if it must necessarily be a sudden and magical event, has weakened the stress laid on repentance. But when for true and abiding repentance of heart, the Church substitutes the notion of penance, formulates a table of quantitative performances of acts of penance for specific sins, and elevates penance into a sacrament, the true significance of repentance is correspondingly atrophied and emptied of its rightful values.

Again, the observances of days has been erected into a virtue with a zeal in some cases little short of idolatrous. It is obvious that in the due provision for public worship and united prayer, times and places must be appointed. But to fix due dates and hours and places, when worshippers impelled by the natural instinct to worship may come together, is a vastly different affair from ordaining certain days as holy, or from decreeing that certain

particular houses are sacred. Our Lord was most emphatic on both the points. He declared the hour to be coming—nay, already come—when neither the Mount of Gerizim nor the Temple at Jerusalem should be the exclusive place for worship; and He Himself was a habitual Sabbath-breaker. The tradition that not even a good deed may be wrought on the Sabbath He openly flouted. "Wherefore it is lawful," He said, "to do good on the Sabbath day." Is it lawful on any other day to do evil? The early Quakers felt so strongly the harm that was done by the superstitious distinctions between *sacred* and *secular* in the matter of days and places, that they were roundly denounced for their departures from the practice of professing Christians of other bodies. Not only did they treat their meeting-houses as secular buildings to which no special reverence was to be paid, but some of them kept their shops open on Sundays as a protest against the formal observance of the day.

Is it needful to particularise concerning the sacraments of Baptism and the Supper?

Baptism, whatever significance it had when only adults were baptised, and were immersed in the waters of the Jordan, or other stream, has utterly lost its significance when applied to unconscious babies, and reduced to a ceremonial sprinkling. The young children whom Jesus took to His arms, declaring that of such is the Kingdom of Heaven, were little unbaptised Jews. Infant baptism is, as practised to-day, a survival of ritual magic, as every student of folklore knows. It has indeed so utterly lost every significance as a ceremonial *cleansing* that not even the elevation of the rite into a sacrament

can lower the standard of personal cleanliness which necessitates daily ablutions and the use of soap. Alone amongst professing Christians the Society of Friends has been consistent in holding water-baptism to be non-essential. On the other hand, it has always maintained that the baptism of the spirit is required of the follower of Christ ; in brief, being that which is clearly set forth by the Apostle Peter, who defines both negatively and positively what Baptism is—"the baptism which doth now save us"—"not the removal of dirt from the body, but the response of a good conscience towards God" (1 Peter iii. 21).

And as to the Supper. It cannot be gainsaid as a matter of history that the celebration of the Pass-over of our Lord with the twelve was a simple evening meal, eaten in the upper room where they were assembled under an overpowering sense of impending events ; a conspiracy to murder on the one hand, a possible triumphant Parousia on the other. Nor can it be gainsaid that in the primitive Church in Jerusalem (and in other cities to which the movement spread) the Supper of the Lord remained a simple common meal at which the Bread and the Wine—that is the meat and the drink—were partaken of in the name of the Lord Jesus, thus remembered by the faithful who were still looking for His daily or hourly re-appearance in the clouds of heaven. The admonition of St. Paul to the Corinthian converts is significant. Having to reprove them for disorders, and exhibitions of gluttony and drunkenness in their celebration of the Supper, he first laid down the rule : "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to

the glory of God " (1 Cor. x. 31) and then proceeded to the necessary rebukes. We do well to remember that for three generations at least, the Supper of the Lord was eaten thus as a common meal, often from house to house, without the slightest suggestion of sacrifice attaching to it, and without the presence of any consecrating priest, for priesthood was brought into the primitive Church only when Judaizing teachers entered into the flock, as the purity of the early faith declined. Not until the time of Tertullian (A.D. 160-240) do we meet with the term "sacrament" as applied to the observance; nor is the supper-table ever spoken of by the Early Fathers as an "Altar."

In after-time the celebration of the Supper was perverted into a ceremonial institution and magnified into a sacrificial rite wherein Jesus Christ is put to death afresh, and wherein by a species of incantation the elements are transmuted into His actual flesh and blood. But if this perverted institution was no part of primitive Christianity, if the Christian Church in fact existed before the sacerdotal celebration, that celebration is an unessential, and is in no sense binding on the followers of Christ nowadays. But if that is the conclusion which we draw, and abandon the celebration of the rite, that conclusion in no way lessens the obligation on us—an obligation too often forgotten—that *every* meal of which we partake should be a sacred meal. In eating and drinking whatever we eat or drink we should do all to the glory of God. The formal "grace" said at public banquets, and still said in many private families at dinner, is at least a recognition of this obligation. In Christian households the grace is, or

should be, no formality : and were the feeling which it is intended to evoke or convey one which deeply pervaded the consciousness of every member, there would be little need for the formal words : a silent grace would be adequate. But does it pervade our consciousness ? Possibly in some deeply devout nature it does. An instance is recorded in the life of Stephen Grellet, the Quaker missionary, who thus wrote :—

“I very much doubt whether, since the Lord by His grace brought me into the faith of His dear Son, I have ever broken bread or drunk wine, even in the ordinary course of life, without the remembrance of, and some devout feeling regarding, the broken body and the blood-shedding of my dear Lord and Saviour.”

But how few of us can make such a confession of our faithfulness in thus showing forth the Lord's death till He come !

Far be it from me to ignore the circumstances that there are hundreds and thousands of devout souls who look at this question from quite another standpoint, and who would differ by whole horizons from the point of view here set forth. I speak of those who have been brought up in the atmosphere of ecclesiastical rules, of institutional observances, of clerical customs, who have been habituated from their earliest years to associate the holiest thoughts and deepest spiritual emotions with the acts deemed to be sacramental. To such, beyond all question, the partaking of the Supper of the Lord, even in that most elaborate form, in which it is removed from all relation with the simple common evening meal of the early Church, is a very sacred event and is held to be for them a real means of grace. There

are devout souls who seem by force of education and habit to need to lean on some artificial support for their spiritual welfare, and to require the ever-repeated stimulus of some historically instituted rite or custom to maintain their piety. Peace be with them and with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ! If for them the ordinary experiences of life do not furnish sufficient means for exercising inward and spiritual graces of the soul, and they resort to outward and visible signs, dare we wish that the outward means to which they link Divine truth should be to them anything less than sacred ? I trow not. But their convictions are not ours ; and as we would leave them perfect liberty for the exercise of institutional observances, so we would claim from them a like freedom for those who are convinced that the abandonment of the institutional observance and a return to the simplicity of the primitive Church is for them a sacred duty.

And if we do so, how much the more does it behove us to show ourselves worthy of the spiritual freedom which we enjoy. Because we reject the formal ceremony and the institutional rite, our lives amongst our fellow men ought all the more, not the less, to be, witnesses of the inward and spiritual grace, that is set free to work within our souls. Our faith ought to be purer, our hands quicker unto good, in that we are not tied by the conventions of the times of ignorance.

The conviction was stated at the outset, and it may here be repeated that in the erection of parts of the daily obligations of life into ordinances, there is both risk and loss. Life cannot be crystallised into set forms, nor duty be stereotyped into prescribed

routine, without some loss of spontaneity, without some lowering of spiritual vitality. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and when it listeth; and the common obligations as between man and man which the day's work reveals, are as sacred, as binding, as any formal regulations of the Church—nay they are more binding. The little daily duties of common life and of social service crowd about us. The great Divine requirements of dealing justly, of showing mercy, and walking humbly before God are ever with us. It is by our faithfulness in these that we stand or fall. It was not without meaning that our Lord once lifted the curtain of the unknown future, to reveal to us His attitude as Judge in the parable of the Great Assize.

To any one who will take it to heart, this is the moral of the Parable: that *in the ultimate resort, the things that matter are not the regulations or institutions which this or that Church may have ordained or prescribed; not this or that item of observance or creed; but just the simple ordinary obligations of human justice and loving kindness.* Have we realised it as a first principle of the religion of Jesus Christ that there is no simple human duty as between man and man that is not an inherent part of the Kingdom of Heaven? Have we discovered that the whole of life from the cradle to the grave is sacramental? Do we understand that we ought to undertake no action or engagement, to enter upon no business, to permit ourselves no relaxation, unless we can ask the blessing of the Eternal upon it? Are we trying so to live, in the consciousness that every detail of our lives is open to the eye of God? Do we comprehend that in the right ordering of our lives, our every word,

our every act, our every gesture, should be the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace reigning within ? So viewed, all duty is divine, every place holy, every hour sacred, everything outward spiritually correlated with the inward. And the sacraments of God, if we would reckon them up, are not to be counted as two, or as seven, but are untold as the sands of the seashore.

CHAPTER XX

Regnum Coeli inter Homines

ONE of the "Sayings of Jesus" recently unearthed in the ruins of Oxyrhyncus runs, as interpreted by the scholars who found it, as follows :—

Jesus saith, Ye ask who are those that draw us to the Kingdom, if the Kingdom is in Heaven? The fowls of the air, and all the beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea, these are they which draw you, and the Kingdom of Heaven is within you; and whoever shall know himself shall find it. Strive therefore to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the Almighty Father; and ye shall know that ye are in the city of God, and ye are the city.

Two essential points of this saying are that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, as is also recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke (chap. xvii. 21); and the other, not recorded anywhere in the Gospels, that self-knowledge is needful for him who would find the Kingdom. In the conjunction of these two ideas there is a strange freshness. Those to whom the quotation "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you" is most familiar, are probably the least likely to have thought of it in connection with the old

Greek maxim "Know thyself." To bring them together is to shed a new light on each. The introspective vision by which a man perceives new light breaking forth within his soul reveals to him also himself: so long as he is looking to the outward he neither discerns his own state, nor perceives the Divine immanence. He lives in time and sense only, in a world of material existence, selfish, because he knows not yet himself. But when, in whatever wise it comes about, he enters the Kingdom, he views all things in a new light. All creation draws him, for it assumes for him a new spiritual significance.

The spiritual state which becomes the possession of the soul was variously described by Jesus as a city, an inheritance, and a kingdom. An inheritance to be entered into and enjoyed; a city to be dwelt in and walked in; a kingdom where love and righteousness reigned supreme. Under each figure dwelt a fresh perception of the spiritual state. But of all the figures thus variously used, none is more frequent or more apt than that of "the Kingdom." Notably in the Gospel of Matthew we find abundant use of the phrase "the Kingdom of the Heavens." It is used less frequently by the other Synoptics, but does not occur in the Gospel of John. Practically synonymous with it is the phrase "the Kingdom of God"; but never in the Gospels do we find the phrase "the Kingdom of Christ." Yet Christ spoke of "My Kingdom," notably in the passage (John xviii. 36) "My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight." And the Book of Revelation speaks of the kingdoms of this world having

become "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). Christ also spoke of His *ecclesia*—the collective term to connote all whom He had called into His Kingdom. It would be well if we should continually refer back to this the original meaning of the word *ecclesia*, translated as it is by the English word "Church"; for too often in reading our New Testament we are apt unconsciously to accept the word "Church" as though it referred to the historical organisation which in after times appropriated for itself the name of "The Church." No one can read either the Epistles of Paul or the writings of Origen and other early Fathers without perceiving the anachronism that would be involved in such acceptance. The *ecclesia* of Christ is a different conception from the semi-coherent assemblage of congregations such as formed the seven Churches of Asia in the immediate end of the apostolic age; a very different affair indeed from the vast political organisations of to-day which severally claim that title for themselves. The "*ecclesia*" of Christ is the counterpart of the phrase the "commonwealth" of Israel (Eph. ii. 12). "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Church" was the illuminating phrase of Ignatius, before the man-made organisation with its hierarchies of clergy and bishops had usurped the title. Tertullian, even, in the second century could write, "*ubi tres sunt laici, ibi est ecclesia*"—where three laymen are met together, *there* is the Church. In the Church of Christ, visible and invisible, the Lord knoweth them that are His, whether inside or outside the pale of the human institution, and Christ's true *ecclesia* assuredly

includes many a one outlawed from the community "because He followeth not US."

If there is one thing more clear than another in the Gospels, it is that the Kingdom, as proclaimed by the Christ, was to be something into which men could enter while in this life, while still in this present world. He did not teach His disciples to pray that they might go to heaven; what He did teach them to pray was that the Kingdom of Heaven might come to them. The Kingdom of Heaven which Christ unfolded in parables was to be as a seed sown in a field, or as precious treasure hid in a field—and the field, He said, was the world. Or, again, it was to be as leaven hid in three measures of meal, silently and invisibly leavening the whole. But above all was it to be esoteric, not coming by outward observation; and His comment, when men should say: lo! here! or: lo! there! was: Go ye not after them nor follow them, for lo! the Kingdom of God is within you." The phrase used by Jesus (Luke xvii. 21) leaves no manner of doubt. St. Paul's parallel phrase (Col. i. 26) about the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations—"which is Christ in you (*ἐν ὑμῖν*) the hope of glory"—is subject to some ambiguity, for there are those who hold that an equally correct translation would be, "Christ the hope of glory amongst you." But in the case of Christ's words the Greek runs, not *ἐν ὑμῖν*, "in you," or "amongst you," but *ἐντος ὑμῶν*, "within you."

The heavenly state or kingdom was then to be within the soul of men, where Christ was to be enshrined. The heavenly state was to be heavenly because of the living presence of Christ. Where

Christ was, there was also His servant to be (John xii. 26). In this world, placed there with human duties and human responsibilities, the Christ-follower was yet to be a citizen of the Kingdom—in the world, yet not of it. As the leaven leavening the whole lump, as the spark of the divine nature, the Christ within was to leaven and illuminate the whole life of man amongst his fellow-men. To be in the Kingdom of God is to be ruled from within by the governance of Divine sanctions, not to be ruled from without by the ordinances of an ecclesiastical polity. The treasure which the soul may possess, now and here, in the Eternity of an All-loving and All-merciful Father, unveiled through the human life of Christ, realised through the indwelling of the Spirit—that is the real Kingdom within, to which mere flesh and blood cannot attain, and which is for ever closed to formalists and bigots. It may be that we have entered the portals of the Kingdom through pious inheritance, having from childhood been taught of the exceeding love of God as manifested in Christ. It may be that we have entered in, in later life, after much sorrow, after much conflict of soul, after many shadows of great darkness. It may, in the boundless mercy of God, be even after sad lapses and terrible sins. But howsoever it be, if we have entered the Kingdom we shall assuredly know of our own selves that it consists in righteousness and joy and a holy spirit of peace within, and not in anywise in any thing outward. That is Christ's presentation of the Kingdom; and the *ecclesia* is His collective name for those who have entered it.

It needs not to be emphasised how far this is

from the conception of "the Church," either as an organised hierarchy of deacons, priests, bishops, cardinals and popes, or as a system of presbyters and moderators and synods, with a subject laity whose purses support the organisation. Such was not the spiritual and interior Kingdom of Heaven proclaimed by Jesus Christ. How utterly, how arrogantly counter to all His teaching all these man-made ecclesiastical institutions are, it is very difficult even for clear-headed men to see, steeped as they are in institutional ideas. "The assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," as visioned by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, was verily no human institution, no curia-ridden hierarchy, no synod-ruled connexion, no society whose membership turned on the payment of quarterly dues. If Jesus were now personally on earth preaching His Syrian Gospel to the frequenters of our modern churches and chapels, it is very doubtful whether they would consider Him a "Christian" at all. His daring to call the wine, after He had blessed it at supper, by its proper name of grape-juice ("this fruit of the vine") would be denounced as blasphemy. If He should declare: "He that is not against Me is with Me," His words would promptly be laughed to scorn as absurdly tolerant of heretics. If He should say, as He once said, "My Father is greater than I," He would instantly be accused of subverting the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity. His interior and spiritual kingdom of love, joy, and peace would be derided as lacking organisation, and as lacking the essential distinction between clergy and laity. Most likely He would be called by the orthodox, an Atheist, a

Dissenter, a Socialist, or a mere Deist. Out with Him, they would cry, since He follows not US. By the political Free Churchman He would be pronounced impracticable, and be suspect of concealed leanings, on the one hand towards Rome and on the other hand towards Unitarianism. By the fashionable High Church set He would be set down as dreadfully Protestant, and distinctly lax in matters of Church doctrine and ritual. No : it is quite certain that, judged by the standards of orthodoxy to-day, Jesus Christ would not be a "Christian."

Nevertheless, the firm foundation stands : "The Lord knoweth them that are His." The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, and they that know themselves shall find it. And ye shall know that ye are in the city of God, and ye are the city.

In the Apocalyptic vision, John of Patmos saw the city descending out of heaven from God. He saw no temple therein. If no temple, no cross. And assuredly no crucifix. For the former things had passed away, and with them the symbols of man's misreading of the Divine message of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXI

See the Christ stand

“For God has other words for other worlds,
But for this world the Word of God is Christ.”

DO we think that we have got rid of all the old anthropomorphic notions of the Deity? Was it in old times only that men regarded the gods as made in the image of man, and deified not only the nobler but also the baser passions of human nature? The Greek spirit which personified not only the virtues but the vices also, and erected temples to the gods of war and lust, is it altogether dead in our day? All the divinities of Olympus, were they not but human attributions writ large? And the Jewish imagination which set up Jahveh as a Lord God who took vengeance upon the enemies of the nation, who was a jealous God and cruel, was it so much purer than the best imagined by Greece or Rome? Have we read Plato and Seneca and Marcus Aurelius in vain?

We are prone to think that in these days we have made some progress in escaping from the vain imaginations of heathendom; that we have buried many old superstitions; that our religion has been cleansed of idols; that petrified dogma is dying;

that the age of superstition is over ; and that ecclesiastical bigotry is tottering to its fall.

It may be so. But are we sure that our soul's tabernacle, emptied of these things, and swept and garnished, is not left a prey to returning evil ?

Though withal we may have gained a clearer perception that certain things once prized and revered by our forefathers are not the permanent truths which they deemed them to be, can it be that we have lost something of reverence for and appreciation of the eternal truths that persist ? Has the clearing away of the things that obscured and obstructed, not revealed any new glories or shown us in renewed splendour the things that remain ? As the transient fades and falls shall not the permanent appear all the more brightly ? And shall it not be all the more treasured by us for its enduring worth ?

Suppose that all man-made institutions have crumbled away ; that all the paraphernalia of the Churches with their hypnotising religiosity have vanished ; that the dogmas are dead, the creeds outworn ; the clerical hierophants deposed ; the droned litanies forgotten, God's air cleared of the odours of stale incense ; the apparatus of mediæval theologies banished to oblivion. Suppose that we have got rid of Jewish legalisms ; of Pharasaic formalisms ; of antique theories built on quagmires of error ; of the dead hand of ecclesiastical tradition ; of the speculations of the schoolmen ; of untenable philosophies of the past. Suppose that we have learned to distinguish between historic fact and pious folklore ; to revalue our Bibles and to cast from them the later additions and interpolations sanctioned by

long usage ; to reject the glosses and misreadings imposed by the zealous ignorant ; to look upon the Scriptures with new eyes enlightened by a living spirit of truth.

Are there not left to us the things that really matter, and in which real religion consists ?

Amen and verily : there remain to us the facts of personal experience and of the collective experience of the race, the phenomena of the soul, the instinct of worship, the perceptions of the good and the beautiful ; the imperious demand for truth at all costs, the sanctions of honour and purity, the eternal principles of justice and pity : are they not divine, and all the more clearly seen to be divine ? Do there not remain the needs of the world ; the appeals of the suffering and the sorrowful, the cries of the wretched and the oppressed ; the insistent call of human brotherhood : are not these ever sounding in our ears ? Nay, shall we not find ampler space for the service of God when the simple human duties obscured by the formalisms and artificialities by which organised Christianity has been for centuries cramped and misdirected ?

But it will not do to stop here with the recognition that the needs of men remain with us.

After all the clearing of the air from cobwebs it would be indeed illogical to refuse to see that in the spiritual history of mankind there stands out one clear episode of revelation, not to be explained away or set aside as mythical, but a permanent fact : a fact of the supremest import in the whole sweep of evolution, in the development of the race, *the fact of Jesus Christ*. The amazing fact of the Christ transcending all the mythical and mystical lore that

has blossomed about Him in human imagination embellishing His birth, His life, and His death with the pious incantations of the succeeding ages cannot be left out. What manner of man must He have been to have evoked these pious fancies and legends. That such a man could appear in such an environment, at such a juncture, is a fact compelling attention and claiming the most discerning consideration.

Here, indeed, we touch a nucleus of truth of vital significance, of intrinsic content, which however overlaid and distorted, alike underlies the majority of the dry evangelical theologies and breathes through the whole expanse of the Catholic consciousness. To state what we mean without falling into the hackneyed phrases, which of themselves beg the questions by their current usage, is a task for which we are all too unequal.

To formulate it would be to crystallise it into language that is inadequate for its expression ; but when it shall be stated it is the answer to the question : "What think ye of the Christ ?"

To that momentous question how variously multitudinous, and how multitudinously varied, have the answers been !

"A mere man" ! How wretchedly inadequate !

"A mere God" ! How utterly false !

What prevarications lie concealed in that little word "mere" ! "Mere history" ? "mere fact" ? "mere truth" ? as though "mere" did not really mean "simple and plain,"—unadulterated with ulterior implication, unadorned with adventitious trappings. But between these two extremes lie all possible answers to the momentous query.

Let us consider the first of them. Jesus Christ was a man. Unquestionably this is the truth, though it may not be the whole truth. He unquestionably entered life by the gate of human birth ; He died a human death. Never since the Docetist heresy dropped shrivelled into the limbo of desuetude, has there been any doubt of the fact.

And what of the second answer : Jesus Christ was a God, or the God ?

Although various isolated theologians—mostly of the fanatic order—have gone perilously near to the extreme of setting up Jesus as the one and only Deity, they have usually saved their position by some verbal qualification. The enthusiasts, for example, who “crown Him Lord of all,” willingly subscribe, in spite of the consequent reduction of their proposal to meaninglessness, to the added words “to the glory of God the Father.” And the cleric who set up the stock phrase “Jesus only” still professed to acknowledge the “Blessed Trinity” and would have protested vigorously against being considered a mono-theistic Deist whose religion was mere Jesuolatry.

In the chapter on the Foundation that is laid (p. 282), as also elsewhere (p. 291), we have emphasised the answer given, by the mouth of the first disciple at Cæsarea Philippi, to the question of Jesus “Whom say ye that I am ?”—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But this response, offered and accepted at the time, does not close the way to an answer which shall at least be a little more specific. If you ask who some person is, it is an incomplete answer to reply that he is the son of some one else, some other known individual. It

may be accurately true, but it is not the completed truth. The question still remains for those who with wider experience and fuller knowledge may come after : What think ye of the Christ ? The Christ Himself gave another clue in the self-revelation recorded in the latter half of the fifth chapter of the Johannine Gospel. Here He emphatically declared that He was not God, but only the Son whom God His Father had sent, in whose name He spoke, whose will He sought to do, from whom He derived His life, and from whom He—powerless in His own self—received the power which He manifested. And in the middle of this self-revelation (verse 27) He let fall a phrase the significance of which has scarcely received the attention it deserved, when He declared that the Father “hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, *because He is the Son of man.*” Momentous indeed is this revelation of the reason for delegating to Him the Divine right of executing judgment. It is of a piece with that other announcement, recorded by all the Synoptics, that whereas the contemporary theologians held that forgiveness of sins was a Divine prerogative to be exercised by God alone, “The Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.”

In another place we have maintained that the true meaning of the Aramaic expression (Bar Nasch) used in these passages as the self-applied description of Jesus is : *the man of men ; the representative man ; the man as man.* It is then to the Christ, in His representative *human* capacity, that the permission to forgive sins was assigned. A truly Divine prerogative ; for is it not by forgiveness of those who may have sinned against him that man

most clearly shows forth in himself his kinship with the Divine? *Forgive and ye shall be forgiven* runs parallel with the supreme injunction: *Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father who is in the heavens is perfect.*

Here is a glimpse into Divine purposes that merits something more than mere attention. Regard it, if you will, as either the absorption into human nature of a Divine quality or as a recreation of the Divine image in the soul of man, here is the sign and mark of at least a stage in the assimilation or identification of Divine and human. When we speak—as the devout have for centuries spoken—of the imitation of Christ, the very use of the term implies, on the one hand, that the human spirit can be sublimated into a Divine pattern, and on the other that the pattern to be imitated is an imitable Christ. We may be forever debarred from saying as in pagan days: let us make God in our image; but we may, nay must, pray that we may be remade in the image of the Divine, that we, too, may be recreated in the stamp of Christ: He who reveals God to us in being “the character of His hypostasis” (Heb. i. 3).

In our chapters on Christ the beginning, and The Evangel of Christ we have endeavoured to show forth how and in what way the human Christ dawned upon the consciousness of His disciples, and what was the essential nature of His message and mission. And here, at length, after traversing other considerations, including a study of Christ’s own religion and that of His first followers in primitive times, we may take into review some of the points in which the Christ is of significance to us to-day.

(i.) *First*, then, the Christ stands for us as the revealed of the Father: the loving approachable Being, who, no longer a distant, awful, revengeful Jahveh, jealous of His prerogatives, nor cruelly visiting the errors of His people upon their children's children, would welcome them to His presence as a father would welcome his long-lost son.

(ii.) *Secondly*, the Christ stands for us as the revealer of man to himself; showing him, in His own human person, what man may become; unfolding to him the Divine possibilities that are in man at his best, and how at his best he can be lifted out of the animalism of his lower self and thereby leave behind the ape-and-tiger qualities of that lower nature. He is the revealer of the Divine possibilities of man.

(iii.) *Thirdly*, and over and above these two great revelations, the Christ stands to us as something more: for the revelations of the nearness of God and of the possibilities in man, great as they are, were almost a mockery, if there did not come with them some power, some stimulus, some mighty inner motive which should impel and constrain man to fulfil the high destiny thus revealed. He wants to be made better, not to be artificially reckoned better while being bad all the time. He wants to be delivered, not from the consequences of sin, but from sinning. Imputed righteousness would be no real righteousness at all. In the strait of conflict in which man finds himself between evil and good, between lower and higher instincts, between base and noble impulses, he finds evil present with him when he would do good. It is the soul tragedy of our human existence. But here, in the conflict,

with the tragedy played out not merely before our eyes but within ourselves, and ourselves the actors in the tragedy, here, by whatever theological phrase we may express it—there comes into action this further office of the Christ that He stands not only as revealer but as deliverer, not only as herald but as helper, not only as guide but as comrade and partaker. Into the soul's travail He can enter to co-operate with the higher against the lower, to fortify the noble against the base, to deliver from thralldom to evil, and to arm man with such control over his inward motives that good may triumph over evil within. In language, the very familiarity with which has robbed it of half its force, the Christ in some dimly intelligible sense lives and moves within the souls of men "saving" them from their baser selves. Christ within, working in that laboratory of conflicting motives, the human soul, becomes in this sense most truly the Saviour of men. Does this appear an obscure or difficult conception? It may be difficult indeed to conceive how or why this comes about. Perhaps it may be useless to try to explain to ourselves the mechanism or philosophy of the process. The phenomenon may baffle analysis or even defy description. Theories often fail, even when the facts are obvious and undeniable. What is hidden from the wise and prudent may be revealed to the babes. And yet, explainable or not, this indefinable power of Christ working within to win man from his worser self, and by his life and spirit to set his feet in the way of righteousness, is not the fact in itself the real evangel? To reveal and to deliver; to show what God is and what man may be; to afford to man the

power to become ; is not that the sum and substance of the message and mission of Christ ? If this be so, then, the Church, past and present, has committed the deplorable mistake of calling by the name of "Gospel," not the thing itself, but the theory which it has substituted for the actual Good News. We are all too prone to put forward theories and then to try to twist the facts to fit them. Far better, more scientific it would be first to ascertain the facts, and leave the theory that will explain them until we have grasped and appropriated the facts. All the theories of the Churches—those dignified by the high-sounding names of "The Atonement," "The Incarnation," and the like, how unessential they are beside the facts, and how meaningless without them !

'Let us look at the fact of the Christ from a somewhat different standpoint. A useful test of this kind of religious truth is to ask oneself how and in what ways God spoke to the human family before the appearing of the Christ. For some thousands of years—it may be of centuries—before the coming of Christ the human family had been reaching out toward God, slowly emerging from the prehuman ancestry out of which it was being lifted. It is unthinkable that all through these ages He left them without witness, or aid, or revelation. The more we study the history of the world, and that of the primitive races and of the primitive religions and worship, the more we realise the crass ineptitude of such a thought. From those dim ages when primitive man first began to discern good from evil, to experience the instinct of worship, and to conceive that there were Divine sanctions for the

emotions of justice and mercy and pity, God has never left man without witness of Himself. To the multitudinous processions of men down the corridors of time there have been the unfoldings of Confucius, of Moses, of Zoroaster, of Gautama Buddha, of Isaiah, of Socrates, and of Plato—great teachers of ethics in all ages. And through all that course of time what was the evangel? Not less, surely, than this: that along with growing perceptions of righteousness, and justice, and brotherhood, there was little by little, and in divers ways, revealed a sense of the greatness and goodness and love of God. To suppose, with the strict evangelicals, that all the myriads of human beings in this vast procession, because they lived before the coming of Jesus Christ were not “saved,” and that they were therefore “lost,” is to suppose something contradictory to every conception of a good and just God.

While for us, in our time, and for this world, the word of God is Christ, other revelations in other ages, though less complete, were none the less divinely vouchsafed. Surely this view, if it does not put Christ into a new and more true position in our minds, certainly puts us into a newer and more true position with respect to Christ. That He should thus be discerned to be not the only one but the highest of the many successive revelations of God, should raise, not lower, our appreciation of Him.

But we may adventure a still wider sweep of thought. We remarked above that it was unthinkable that through all the dim pre-Christian ages God should have left this world and all its scattered tribes without word or witness of Himself. But

we have been learning in these later times of the immensity of the Universe ; of the infinitudes of other worlds than ours ; of other realms of space wherein each fixed star is itself a sun lighting its own system of planets ; of other star-systems so distant from ours that their light has taken aeons to travel to us ; so that in these infinitudes of space our own planet is a most insignificant speck. It were, then, the sheerest madness to suppose that in all these vast multitudes of worlds our own petty globe should be the sole and only abode of life, and that the Creator of all should have no care or regard for the beings whatever they are with whom He has peopled those other worlds. The cold pitiless eyes that brand His nothingness into man . . .¹

* * * *

If at this stage a digression may be permitted, it would be apposite to point to the illustration afforded by a remarkable dislocation of theme which occurs in the ministry of St. Paul. There is a striking contrast between the message which he delivered to pagan hearers at Lystra and Athens (as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles) and that which immediately afterwards he gave to his auditory at Corinth, as narrated subsequently by him in the first two chapters of his Epistle to the Corinthian Church. At Lystra and at Athens he is dealing with the pre-Christian revelations of God. Save

¹ This passage was left unfinished by Dr. Thompson, the manuscript having a blank space which it was his intention to complete when he revised this chapter. In the notes for the draft of the chapter it appears that he contemplated a further section, indicated thus : "Communion of saints affords a revelation of the Divine in men. Divinity revealed through humanity. In listening to the sorrows and needs of our fellows we shall have heard the voice of the Christ. The eternal message of God, the evangel of the Spirit."

for one oblique reference to the resurrection there is nothing Christian about his discourses. In luminous phrase he set forth the universal scope of religion. The living God, creator and ruler of the universe, did not dwell in man-made temples, nor needed any human offerings. He had made of one blood all nations of men. And we, being His offspring, live and move and have our being in Him, and owe to His beneficence the rain and the fruitful seasons, and must not conceive of Him in the likeness of sticks and stones graven by the art and device of man. But now God has commanded all men to repentance, having appointed a day when mankind will be judged, the judge being (not Rhadamanthus, but) a man who had been raised from the dead. Briefly, then, St. Paul's luminous message to these Greeks was : God, as revealed through nature and history.

When he departed from Athens and came to Corinth, his message is in complete contrast. The principal theme is now the scandal of the crucifixion of Christ. Narrating his mission to his converts subsequently he reminds them that they, too, were waiting for a day, and that God, by whom they were called into the fellowship (*κοινωνίαν*) of His Son Jesus Christ, was a faithful God. He pointed out that, while Jews require a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom, his message was to preach the evangel of a crucified Christ ; to Jews a scandal, and to Greeks folly. Nevertheless to those who heard the call, Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God. And he Paul himself had not come with eloquence or philosophy to them, but had decided to recognise nothing among them

except Jesus Christ—even the man who had been crucified ; so that their faith should not stand in any human wisdom, but in the power of God. For the wisdom of God, hidden even from the rulers of this age (who had they known it would not have murdered the Lord of Glory) had been revealed unto us by His Spirit ; for the Spirit searches all things, yes even the deep things of God. Christ had sent him—Paul—not to baptise but to preach this evangel, lest the cross of Christ should be emptied ; for the word of the cross was folly to those who were perishing, but was the power of God to those who were being saved. And for this reason : that God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which were mighty. Jesus Christ was thus made by God to be for us a manifestation not only of wisdom and righteousness, but also of sanctification and deliverance ; and by that deliverance they whom Paul addressed had become identified as in Christ. Briefly, then, the Gospel which Paul announced at Corinth is : God, as revealed through the man Jesus Christ.

Startling as the contrast may seem between the two presentations of truth, the universalism preached at Athens and the particularism so passionately announced at Corinth, there is in reality no inherent incompatibility between them. They are both phases of truth now recognised by most except those who are shut up in the arbitrary theological limitations of the evangelical theory. For God did, and does still, reveal Himself through nature, and did and still does, reveal Himself in Christ. None will

reject either phase save zealots whose spiritual horizon is circumscribed by the dogma of sacrificial Atonement. The moral leverage of the cross is enormous ; but it may be stated in other terms than those of expiation, Christ Himself so stated it : "greater love hath no man than this : that he lay down his life for his friends."

Are we under any temptation to forget the infinite significance to the race of the tragedy of Calvary ? That tremendous event changed the whole outlook of mankind, so that ever since mankind has looked upon life and death and destiny with new eyes. The pre-Christian phase of truth—the gospel of Athens and Lystra—is still true ; but luminous as it is, it is outshone by that other phase of truth, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Look where we will, strive as we may, we cannot get away (to use the words of Father George Tyrell) from the vision "of that strange man on His cross." Creeds may fade, but the vision persists. "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end." There to all ages is to be found the supreme manifestation of Divine renunciation and of Divine love.

"I . . . seek and I find it, O Soul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever ; a Hand like
this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the
Christ stand."

Index

A

ALGER, 55
Almsgiving, 300
Altar, 156, 305
Asceticism, 235
Athanasius, St., 240, 245, 248
Atheists, 23
Anthropomorphism, 19, 317
Arnold, Matthew, 65, 196, 201
Augustine, St., 224

B

Bacon, *re* Idols, 12
Baptism, 303
Bergson, 202
Berkeley, 67
Beuchner, 116
Bonaventura, Saint, 155, 215
Bonney, Rev. Canon, 186
Bramwell Booth, 186
Buddha, 146, 156

C

Cæsarea Philippi, Confession at,
35, 82, 84, 86, 280, 291, 321
Calvin, 13, 288
Choice of faith, 163
Choice of religious community,
181
Christ, Divinity of, 76, 321
—, the Avenger, 80
—, humanity of, 145, 225, 322
—, creed of, 242

Christianity and war, 230
Clement of Rome, 144, 263, 276
Codex Bezae, 76
Conversion, 191

D

Dante, 52
Darwin, Charles, 118
Demons, casting out of, 257
Descartes, 63
Didache, 273
Diogenes Laërtius on Plato, 146
Diognetus, Epistle to, 265
Dogmas, decay of, 1, 29, 203

F

Fasting, 297
Foundation of Church, 35, 280,
292

G

Gore, Bishop, 126
Gospel, 89, 282
Grace before meals, 305
Goethe, 179
Greg, W. R., 201
Gregory, St., of Nyssa, 292
Grellet, Stephen, 306

H

Hades, 253
Hades, deliverance from, 85

Haeckel, 117, 135
 Heresy, 168
 Hobbes, 192
 Huggins, Sir Wm., 186
 Huxley, 118

I

Iconoclasm, 11, 140
 Ignatius, Father, 126, 274
 Imitation of Christ, 112, 180, 194,
 207
 In Memoriam of Tennyson, 200
 Instinct for religion, 8, 15
 Intuitive discernment, 65, 284, 291

J

James, Prof. William, 202
 Justin the Martyr, 263

K

Kingdom of God, 311

L

Lange, 117
 Last Supper, 304
 Law of Brotherliness, 233
 Law of Continuity, 211
 Law of Destiny, 209
 Law of Deterioration, 215
 Law of Growth, 214
 Law of Health (spiritual), 212
 Law of Justification, 215
 Law of Inulteriority, 219
 Law of Forced Action, 219
 Law of Perception, 216
 Law of Revelation, 217
 Law of Obedience, 218
 Law of Service, 218
 Law of Suffering, 220
 Lightfoot, Bishop, 143, 264

Lilly, Dr. W. S., 81, 186, 200
 Lodge, Sir O., 202
 Logos, 105
 Luther, 120, 288

M

Maeterlinck, 135
 Manning, Cardinal, 125, 237
 Marriage, 236
 Materialism, definition of, 116
 Milman, 21
 Moleschott, 118
 Monism, 117, 135

N

Nehushtan, 138
 Neodoxies, 27
 Newman, Cardinal, 125
 Newton, 66
 Nietzsche, 135, 201

O

Omar Khayyam, 135, 164, 201
 Origen, 53
 Orthodoxy, 26
 Oxyrhyncus, 310

P

Philosophic doubt, 199
 Pliny, letter of, 278
 Psychological research, 202
 Purgatory, 241, 253

Q

Quaker Martyrs, 13
 Quakers, 134

R

Rashdall, Rev. H., 10, 81, 143
 Resurrection, 43
 Religious controversy, 202
 Ruskin, 198

S

Sacrament, meaning of, 293
 Sacrifice, 151
 Salvation Army, 99
 Sceptic, 168
 Servetus, Michael, 13
 Service of man, 223
 Significance of life, 292
 Signs and wonders, 38
 Spencer, Herbert, 9, 70
 Spinoza, 197
 Spiritual discernment, 63
 Sport, 232
 Sweated labour, 232

T

Tabb, Father, 186
 Talmud, 146
 Thomas à Kempis, 111, 120
 Tyrell, Father George, 331

U

Umiliana, Saint, 301

V

Virgin birth, 148, 236, 275, 292
 Vulgate, 143

W

Wallace, Alfred Russel, 118
 Watson, Dr., 98
 Wesley, John, 127
 Whittier, 185
 Wöhler, 117

THE END

